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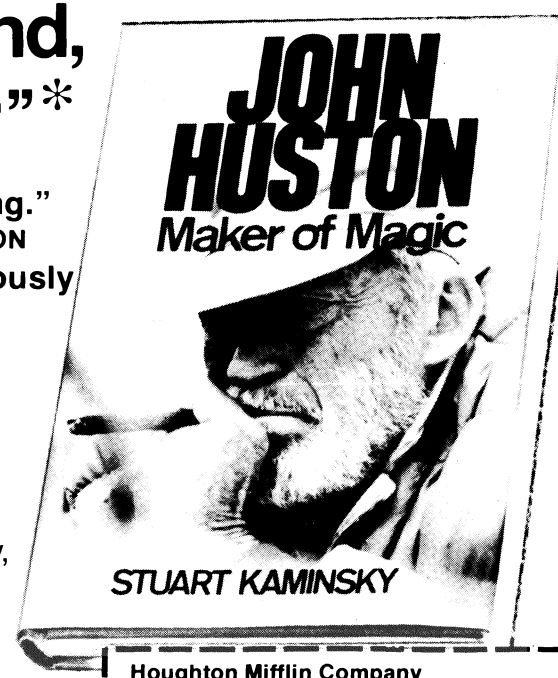

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VOL. XXXII, NO. 1 Fall 1978

INTERVIEW

Emile de Antonio: An Interview — ALAN ROSENTHAL 4

ARTICLES

The Losey-Pinter Collaboration — BEVERLE HOUSTON and MARSHA KINDER 17

Istvan Szabo: Dreams of Memories — KAREN JAEHNE 30

REVIEWS

The Buddy Holly Story — JUDITH BLOCK 42

Girlfriends — MARSHA KINDER 46

The Lacemaker — GILLIAN PARKER 51

An Unmarried Woman — TODD GITLIN and CAROL S. WOLMAN 55

Print Generation — SCOTT MACDONALD 58

CONTROVERSY & CORRESPONDENCE

Creative Remembering (and Other Perils of Film Study) — BRUCE KAWIN 62

Defending European Independents — SCOTT MACDONALD 65

COVER: Nine covers out of the past twenty years of *Film Quarterly*'s existence.

Editor's Notebook

TWENTY YEARS

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But, in true cineaste fashion, I can offer only flashes from the past. All which is done in the world, Aldous Huxley reminds us, is done by individuals; "society" is an explanatory but not an operative concept. And so the history of a journal, one tiny organism in the body social, is also a history of persons.

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FILM QUARTERLY is published by the University of California Press, Berkeley, California 94720. $1.75 per copy, $7.00 per year, $13.00 for two years in the U.S. Elsewhere: $8.00 per year, $15.00 for two years. Institutional rates slightly higher. Editor: Ernest Callenbach. Assistants to the Editor: Rose Anne White and Sandy Flitterman. New York Editor: William Johnson. Los Angeles Editor: Michael Dempsey. Boston Editor: Randall Conrad. London Editor: Colin Young. Rome Editor: Gideon Bachmann. Advisory Editorial Board: Andries Deinum, John Fell, Hugh Gray, Brian Henderson, Albert Johnson, Marsha Kinder, William J. McClung, Neal Oxenhandler. Copyright 1978 by The Regents of the University of California. Views expressed in signed articles are those of the authors. Indexed in **Art Index, Humanities Index, Book Review Index, Monthly Cumulating Periodical Index,** and **Film Literature Index.** Published quarterly. Second-class postage paid at Berkeley, California and at additional offices. Printed in U.S.A. Type: Freedmen's Organization, Los Angeles. Printing: Peter G. Levison Associates, San Francisco. ISSN: 0015-1386.

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Hollywood Quarterly, a copublication of the University Press and the Hollywood Writers Mobilization (another dangerous red outfit). Deinum also remembered me from the Chicago founding convention of the American Federation of Film Societies. After persuading Frugé that I might have some promise as an editor, he agreed to join the advisory editorial board for *FQ*, and he has been a member of it ever since.

These sinister connections ultimately led to the development of plans for a film journal that would be readable, have pictures, and attempt to cope on a respectable intellectual level with the curious evolution of the American and international cinema. I have never quite understood why Frugé thought such a project might be an ornament to the Press, but he backed it staunchly in the early years when it lost money, and took pains that its organizational aegis was firm and resilient—despite his own progressive disinterest in movies in favor of Greek.

Cut. I have driven a rented car up the Santa Monica Canyon to visit Gavin Lambert, seeking instruction on how to run a film magazine—which of course neither I nor anybody else I knew had ever tried. By then Gavin had moved out of criticism into scriptwriting. His charming, elegant house was full of paintings. To my queries about how in the world he had managed to do all that, in *Sequence* and then in *Sight & Sound*, he replied simply, "Well, you know, we were all *mad keen*." I got him to agree to try sitting on our advisory editorial board, and I thought lengthily on his remark. For it was clear from the start that, by our auspices and our circumstances, *FQ* could not be a "line" journal publishing only the work of a small group with a narrowly focused position. We would have to be an "arena" journal, in which different points of view could productively contend; our task was to make sure the entrants were held to the highest standards of performance. But, since we had no fixed perimeter to defend, we could afford to be audacious, sometimes contradictory (printing *pro* and *con* reviews where we felt two positions could be seriously argued). Privately, we spoke of the "bullshit quotient" of magazines, and attempted to keep ours low. It was, in the end, the promotion of serious argument that we were after.

Cut. I am again in the foreign territory of Los Angeles, looking for people in the UCLA film department who might help with the magazine. A friend then toiling for Jerry Wald at Fox told me to look up somebody named Colin Young. "He's British, he's very interested in Japanese films, and he's *lively*." I got hold of Colin, who is actually a Scot—a distinction he made abundantly clear subsequently—and we met late on a rainy afternoon in a dank "temporary" building where UCLA film students did their editing. We kept our raincoats on against the chill, but a jug of cheap wine that Colin pulled out of a cabinet helped some. We began fantasizing jointly about what a film magazine might do. By the time we finished the jug, I was sure we had Our Man in L.A., and over the subsequent years, until he went off to run the British National Film School, Colin was a major force in shaping the magazine.

Cut. I am writing the last page of a four-page single-spaced letter to a would-be contributor, explaining after a minute *explication-de-texte* that we will therefore not be able to use the manuscript. It occurs to me, with the blindingness of those flashes which enable us to grasp truly obvious ideas, that editors are not meant to be loved, only respected. It is a delicate thing to sit in judgment on other writers' work, especially when you get to know them; unconscious corruptions of judgment may creep in. On the other hand, there are few contacts more exciting than that between a writer and an editor genuinely trying to help make a given manuscript the solidest, tightest, strongest, brightest, loveliest thing it could possibly be. But it is not a pleasure too many people find to their taste. I am lucky, at least from some perspectives, to have some knack for this kind of craftsmanship, and though it may seem suspicious for *any*one to do *any*thing for twenty years, I make no apologies.

Cut. I requisition a small gray box to hold 3x5 cards. In it I accumulate the names of all the people writing about film in English from whom I wanted to try and get articles. I still have this box. It sits in the central position on my desk. From time to time, as things go in the little world of film criticism, certain cards become moribund. People "graduate" to other, better-paying publications, or lapse into some kind of normal life, which hardly includes writing about movies for a penny and a half per word. They are replaced by new people who have realized they have things to say about films and are determined to say them. These people, like all cultural workers, are precious to a society beyond superficial estimate. Very little serious cultural work is done for rational economic remuneration. We write film criticism for our friends. Sometimes it has pleasant and unanticipated after-effects; one gets invited to a festival, or an article is anthologized, or one meets a fascinating film-maker. But it is not for money, or for influence, and certainly not for academic promotion, that the best film criticism is done. The thing is an art; it does not respond, at the highest levels, to commissioning and "assignments," and an editor's best strokes are normally to help a writer realize what he/she really *wants* to write. It is only when the work is, in some profound sense, its own reward that it is really good.

Cut. We are debating, at one of our rather rough-and-tumble, hectic editorial meetings, what should be our attitude toward "theoretical" articles. The table is littered with the remains of lunch, beer bottles, coffee-cups, an unlit cigar, manuscripts heavily marked up with often snide comments, notes, a tattered agenda, and copies of the previous issue for post-mortem. Hugh

Gray, Oxonian and constitutionally Bazinian, who has combined in one person many lifetimes, has just brought us up short again with Aristotle, followed by some appallingly brilliant pun. We weigh and sift and consider, in a mysterious consensus process whereby, never taking a vote in all our 20 years, we somehow arrive at 64 pages worth of a variety and scope and bite sufficient to make us all content and produce a somewhat balanced issue. And then, after some weeks of copy-editing, revising, re-writing, proof-reading, and layout, I send it all off, yet again, to the printer. By the time it emerges into the tender care of the US mails, we are already well on the way to the next one. As the words to a famous piece of film score have it, "And so we go on, from morning till night."

CONTRIBUTORS

JUDITH BLOCH is a freelance writer who lives in Berkeley. TODD GITLIN teaches sociology at Berkeley, and has written widely on mass media. BEVERLE HOUSTON is Associate Professor of English at Pitzer College, Los Angeles, and is guest editor of a forthcoming issue of *Quarterly Review of Film Studies*. KAREN JAEHNE lives in Berlin and has written for various film journals. BRUCE KAWIN is the author of *Mindscreen*, a new study of self-reflexive films (Princeton); he teaches at Boulder. MARSHA KINDER teaches at Occidental College, Los Angeles, and is working on a screenplay. SCOTT MacDONALD teaches at Utica College, Utica, New York. GILLIAN PARKER teaches at Rutgers and is co-editing, with Michael Klein, an anthology on the classic English novel and film. ALAN ROSENTHAL, whose *New Documentary in Action* is widely used in film classes, makes films in Israel, England, and America; he teaches at Hebrew University, Jerusalem. CAROL S. WOLMAN is a psychiatrist in private practice in San Francisco.

Two omissions from the Summer issue listings: first, Randal Johnson, who wrote the article in recent developments in Brazilian cinema, teaches Spanish and Portuguese at Rutgers. (Also, a typographical slip omitted mention, on p. 44, of Eduardo Escorel's *Lesson of Love* (1975), Jaoquim Pedro de Andrade's *Conjugal Warfare* (1975) and Bruno Barretto's *Dona Flor and Her Two Husbands* as additional popular recent films.) Second, the title of Brian Henderson's forthcoming book (Dutton) will be *A Critique of Film Theory*.

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ALAN ROSENTHAL

Emile de Antonio: An Interview

De Antonio is a documentary film-maker who achieved the rare distinction of getting on Nixon's White House enemies list. The political views which have energized his films are unusually vigorous and cogent, and his conversation is often very funny, including many tantalizing stories of his behind-the-screen adventures. The interview below was conducted by Alan Rosenthal for inclusion in a sequel to his* New Documentary in Action, *which will be published in 1979 by the University of California Press.

How did you get into documentary? What was the starting point for you?

I began in 1961 with a film called *Point of Order.* My life up until that point had been very much living by my wits. Unlike most film-makers I was an intellectual. I went to Harvard and did graduate work at Columbia. At college I joined the Young Communist League, and the John Reed Society. In fact, for someone who is not much of a joiner, I joined everything political I could. Later I taught philosophy but thought that was a mug's game. So I became a one-day-a-year business person. I made a lot of money one day a year. I was a Marxist among capitalists but became depoliticized by my army experiences in World War II. Afterwards I got into alcohol and women. I was married five times and lived with countless other ones. I read a lot and led a generally chaotic bohemian life.

In 1959 I became a communist again—unaffiliated—and also got interested in film, which I had always disliked. I had admired the Marx brothers. W. C. Fields and the early Soviets, but I did not go to the movies as Americans did. I mean a year would go by without seeing a picture.

Why did you suddenly become political again in 1959?

I think I sniffed in the air that politics might work again. I knew Kennedy and I was more uncomfortable with his election than I was with Eisenhower's or Truman's. I started meeting young radicals who were political for the first time. During the fifties I had as friends what you might call the homosexual avant-garde. My best friends were John Cage, Rauchenberg, and Jasper Johns who used to come to my house in the country, and get drunk, and talk.

When you started off in film, why did you choose the McCarthy question?

Well, he was surely the most powerful and important political figure of the fifties. He defined that decade that was coming to an end. And there was absolutely nothing about him on film except that rather empty-barrel TV-show which was made four years after he had been running over the country.

The choice of the figure was clear, and then what further appealed to me was the idea of working with dead footage—a kind of collage junk idea I got from my painter friends.

When I first approached CBS about acquiring the McCarthy footage, CBS claimed they did not have it. They were not lying. They had masses of material stored in a bonded film warehouse in New Jersey all jumbled up, confused and forgotten. However friends of mine at CBS conducted a search within the organization for me and found 188 hours of raw material in this warehouse.

Now, to the film itself. I wanted to make a political documentary and, in a certain way, the initial idea came from Dan Talbot. Incidentally it was Dan, who owned a theater called The New

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Emile de Antonio "and friends"

Yorker, who actually reshaped the taste of the American cinema audience by running very unconventional material at his movie-house. One day Dan said, "What is the most interesting thing on television that happened in the fifties?" and we both said "the Army-McCarthy hearings." Dan didn't want to make a film—he just wanted to gather a big chunk of the hearings or even their summaries and make a program about McCarthy.

I knew nothing about film but I wanted to make a film out of the material. Dan, who is somewhat more timid than I am, said, "You don't know anything about film, let's ask Orson Welles to do it." He cabled Welles but Welles wasn't interested. We then hired a professional to do it. He started but then we fired him and I took it over. The fundamental idea of the film was that there would be no narration, and I think one of the important things about it is that it's the first full-length documentary political without one line of narration. It is totally organic.

There was obviously a possibility that Dan would make the film. How did the final decision come to you?

I said to Dan, "I'll match you. Either you'll make a film or I will. We'll toss and whoever wins will make a film without any interference from anyone else. When it's finished we'll look at it together." Dan then said, "That's unfair. I can't do that. I own this theater. I have a wife and children." So I said, "I'll do it." And he said, "OK," and that is what happened.

How did you raise the money?

I have always been good at raising money. I have raised over one million dollars to make leftwing films. I don't come from a poor background and I have always known people with money. Anyway, there was this nice liberal mil-

lionaire, called Eliot Pratt, who gave his occupation as sharecropper. He was a liberal, very rich, and he hated McCarthy, and I went to see him. We met at his house and then went over to 73rd and 3rd where there is a place called Allen's. We had a hamburger and a couple of drinks, and I told him what I wanted to do. Elliot thought and then said, "Well how much money do you think that would cost?" I said, "I don't know. I have never made a film." So he said, "Well what if I put up $100,000 to start?" I said, "Wait, first I have to get a corporation established." Later the meal check was brought and he tipped 20 cents, and then did indeed give me the $100,000. In the end, the film cost a lot more.

CBS having a monopoly on the material demanded $50,000 for the copyright (it didn't matter the material was dead and useless) and fifty percent of every dollar made after that. CBS has made more money out of *Point of Order* than anybody.

What was your goal or guiding objective when you started cutting?

There are two concepts that seemed in part what I wanted, which were form and content. The formal aspects were a lot more intriguing. What I frankly wanted to make was a commercially successful film and *Point of Order* was the first political non-TV documentary after World War II that was successful financially and played theaters. I wanted the feature line to be organically contained, unified, without any external noise, without any narration explaining anything. I wanted the thing to be self-explanatory political statement. There is something in narration that to me is inherently fascist and condescending in the sense that you are telling other people what it is they are looking at while they are looking at it. If the film works you do not have to narrate it, it narrates itself.

When CBS agreed to make the archive film was it worried about your political background, or the use to which you might put the material?

CBS was so nervous about who we were, and was I a communist, that clause 14 of our contract with CBS stated that if the CBS name was ever mentioned, the contract would be null and void, and the $50,000 forfeited. When the film was finished however, and all the reviewers loved it and *Time* magazine said, "A psychedelic experience," etc., CBS took all those reviews and published them in a very handsome brochure. And that outraged me, because the critics and CBS missed the point. And all the liberals who had their ejaculations looking at the film, thinking about what it was they should have been doing during that time, also missed the point.

The film is not an attack on McCarthy. The film is an attack on the American government. My feeling is that if you look at the film carefully, Welch comes off as badly as McCarthy. He comes off as a rather brilliant, sinister, clever lawyer who used McCarthy's techniques to destroy McCarthy. There has certainly never been a more craven Secretary of the Army than Stevens, who was humbled and crumbled by McCarthy, and there has never been more patent window dressing than those idiotic generals sitting bemedalled behind the Secretary of the Army. I am thinking now of making a play out of this—a kind of Dada piece of theater, in which the generals will be painted 15 feet high and Welch will be played by Oscar Lee Brown, as a kind of sibilant wild homosexual. But all insinuating, because Welsh wasn't homosexual. He was clever and McCarthy knew he was being gored to death. Don't misunderstand me. I wanted McCarthy gored to death but I also wanted the whole system to be exposed, and the only people who saw that were a few Marxists. The good bourgeois critics loved the film and made it successful.

What were your problems of "innocence" in terms of making a first film? What were the mistakes you made?

Well, on the whole it was a generally satisfying experience. There is nothing that I would do differently in that first film. In other films after that, yes. But I have never worked so hard in my life. It was my introduction to real work. I mean I had done all kinds of physical work, and I enjoyed it, but that was different from spending two years, seven days a week for probably 10-12 hours a day, fiddling with all that stuff.

What were you looking for? How did you select your hour and a half out of the 180 hours?

For me the most important thing in film is structure. Now I knew the material very well before I saw any of it because I had watched the hearings and I have a good memory for that kind of thing. There were certain key moments, but the

Welch: "brilliant, sinister, clever."

Roy Cohn and Sen. Joseph McCarthy

basic idea was to tell the story of what happened and to reveal the softness of the system, and to reveal how a demagogue was undone by a machine, because he was not undone by any principled stand or by morality or by anyone being against him.

Can you tell me something about your restructuring of the material of the Army hearings in Point of Order *and why you did it?*

The most obvious restructuring of what happened is at the very end of the film. Now in real life, no point was made. The actual hearings ended quietly; the Senate wanted them over—the President wanted them over—too much of the American system had been revealed. So the hearings actually ended with Senator Mundt banging his gavel, and everyone cleaning up his papers and walking out.

I wanted to reveal what really happened, and I did not want to *say* it—I wanted to have it done *cinematically.* What really happened is that McCarthy lost the American people. When those hearings were over, so was McCarthy. When those hearings were over he never had any strength left. When those hearings were over the Senate finally had the guts to produce a censure hearing. And that's the reason that that last sequence is made out of many days and in addition has that immediate cut to the silent, absolutely empty room. That emptiness is indeed the emptiness that fell on McCarthy. He had nothing left to say to anybody, and he died of drink almost exactly three years later.

It seems to me that besides the end, you manipulated words and pictures quite extensively in the film.

Frequently. The material is totally manipulated. *Cinéma vérité* is first of all a lie, and secondly a childish assumption about the nature of film. *Cinéma vérité* is a joke. Only people without feelings or convictions could even think of making *cinéma vérité.* I happen to have strong feelings and some dreams and my prejudice is under and in everything I do.

Let us just come back to vérité *in a minute. What I would like to understand is how you can say narration is fascist, because it tells you exactly what to think and yet you can use a very deliberate, manipulative editing to do the same thing.*

Well, it is not just fascist, it is boring, and this is what's wrong with television documentaries. It's boring as hell, and maybe more than fascist there is a kind of contempt built into it, and it is too easy. When you come to a filmic problem you solve it by just having a voice telling you what it is.

But if I am manipulated by your editing, by your structuring the film's A against B against C, why is that any more creditable?

Well, if it is more creditable it is because it works better.

Why are you so down on and angry at cinéma vérité*?*

Well, first of all the phrase. What I am in favor of in *cinéma vérité* is the technical stuff that was developed by the people—the light cameras, the effective sync-sound systems. But it is the empty-headed pretentiousness that gets me. The belief of lack of prejudice. There is no film made without pointing a camera and the pointing of that camera is already, in a sense, a definitive gesture of prejudice, of feeling. You cannot cut a piece of film, you cannot edit film without indicating prejudice. The *cinéma vérité* people are essentially apolitical,

so that they go for high moments. Does anyone still call himself *cinéma vérité*? No! I think it is fairly dead. Leacock does not make films anymore; Pennebaker is a foundation entrepreneur, and the Maysles say their films are better than fiction or documentary. So I don't know who in this country makes *cinéma vérité*. But there is not one of those *vérité* films that couldn't be challenged on the basis of whose truth was it. It is much better, I think, to make a film from the position that you really occupy, rather than pretend you occupy no position, since that is almost a physical impossibility.

Do you make films for specific audiences or just films for yourself, or a combination of both? Who is the audience?

I am a Marxist and I am a bad Marxist, because I do not make films for audiences, I make them for myself. I have thought this out very hard, and it seems to me to be as contemptible as television to assume that I am going to make a film for this kind of an audience. I have no measuring devices, nor am I interested in measuring devices that would measure what kind of an audience.

I usually make films because of anger or opportunity. I made *Millhouse* for example because I had been angry with Nixon since 1946 when he began his political life, since the Hiss case, but I didn't do anything till the opportunity presented itself.

What was that opportunity?

I was over in Movielab working, when the phone rang and someone said, "Look, I have just stolen all the footage of one of the networks on Nixon and I'll give it to you for nothing, if you will make a film about him." I said, "I cannot give you an answer on that, let me have ten minutes." He called back later and I said, "OK, I'll do the film on Nixon, I will put aside what I am doing (which was *Painters Painting*) but I never want to see you, and I won't pay you for it." He said, "I don't want money."

Then I said, "Come to the Movielab building at midnight tonight. I'll have the superintendent let you in, and you leave everything in the middle of the room." When I came in at seven in the morning, there were 200 cans of film there. I can say that freely now, because the statute of limitations has expired. That was in 1970.

I was the only film-maker on Nixon's "enemies" list for making a film. There are ten White House memoranda that begin, "The White House, Washington, DC. Subject: Emile de Antonio." Those memoranda are actually more interesting to me than some of the prizes I have won. Those ten pages are the ultimate prize.

As the sixties progressed did you get any feeling of being watched by higher-ups or by officialdom because of the nature of your films?

Well, not until my second film which invited interference.

That was Rush to Judgment?

Yes.

What happened?

When we went to film in Dallas the Sheriff's department simply followed us around with a pick-up truck with a lot of shot guns.

Do you think this was political, or does it generally happen to film-makers? I have a friend who was filming in the South and had exactly the same experience, and it was not a particularly political film.

Well, I think this was for political reasons because of a good many other things that happened. I now have two suits against the government. One is before Judge Sirica against the FBI, the other is before Judge Bryant against the CIA. This one has to do with the FBI because Mark Lane and I uncovered a great many people the Warren Commission could not seem to find.

I'll give you an example of the atmosphere. Jean Hill was probably as close as anybody when Kennedy was shot and she was one of the many people we called. When we first phoned her she said, "Sure, why not." We didn't lie. We didn't say we were CBS or NBC, we just said we were an independent group of people making a film who doubted the assumptions of the Warren Commission.

When we went to film her she was really scared. There was obviously a short circuit between our call to her and our appearing. This happened in many cases. She said, "Look. I am divorced. I have two kids, I teach in public schools, and I was told I would be fired if I talked to you. Now please go away." This happened in one form or another of more or less severe intensity right along the line. People knew where we were going to be, and they knew the people we were going to see,

and it could only be done by wire-tapping or a combination of wire-tapping and following.

Well, it was the first first night I was in Dallas. My crew had come in from San Francisco and I was there alone and was briefing them. Suddenly there was a knock on the door, introducing two very pleasant-looking young men, wearing suits and ties with Stetsons. They produced some grey visiting cards—they were both members of the Dallas homicide squad. They were very polite. And right then you have to make a decision; you claim your constitutional rights and you get run out of town or you play with them, truthfully. I said, "I work for the Judgment Film Corporation," (which is a corporation I created to make that film) and told them what we were interested in. They were very sweet until the name of Benavides came up. Benavides was the person who was probably closest to Officer Tippet when he was killed. At that point the police said, "You are not going to interview that 'boy,' Benavides." And we never did. He was frightened out of town, and it happened with plenty of people.

Can you go into the origins of In the Year of the Pig, *the decision to make the film and what you thought the media had or had not done until that time?*

Well, the media never did anything substantive or critical. That was part of the greatest hype that the American people have ever suffered from the media. Every day we saw the war. Every day we saw dead Americans, dead Vietnamese, bombings, all kinds of rather interesting things, but never one program on why; never one program on the history of it; never one program attempting to place it in context. I wanted to do an intellectual and historical overview of the whole thing going back to World War II and just before, then through the French experience down to the Tet offensive which was when I finished the film.

I was angry about Vietnam and wanted to do something. Then two academics came and said, "We have seen your other films, we think you should make a film about Vietnam," and it all suddenly went "click" for me. I had good connections with both the NLF and the DRV and connections in Eastern Europe, and was able immediately to raise a lot of money and go all over Europe and collect Soviet footage, East German footage, Czech footage, etc. I then did a lot of shooting of all kinds of people like Jean Lacouture, Philippe de Villers, and various Americans, and some really crazy stuff like Senator Morton calling Ho Chi Minh the George Washington of Vietnam.

You really have to pay attention to the film all the time. Did you have any fears of losing your audience with such long stretches of interviews?

None. I always had the feeling that people will accept what is well done. It is meant to be historical and argumentative. I am not worried about boring people in films. In some of my films, like *Painters Painting,* I have sequences that are meant to make people sweat and strain to hear what is being said. Going to movies is too passive. I want the audience to strain. I don't want it to be easy for them.

When you did In the Year of the Pig *did you work outwards from the transcripts?*

I do everything at once. I used to have a very big office space and also had a friend who makes cardboard boxes. So I used to get enormous pieces of cardboard, almost as big as that wall, and I would start pasting up transcripts of the track, along with ideas of images. I'd then try the track material on a Steenbeck with different images, so the process was always one of collage. You are always cutting away and always trying to make two or three things happen at the same time, and those who get it, get it, and those who do not get it, do not get it, and it doesn't really make any difference anyway.

Were there sequences that you had in the rough cut which you took out?

Of course. In the finished film there is one sequence which I dislike, that I would cut out today, which are the six minutes on the negotiations. I didn't like it at the time and I don't know why I left it in. That was a weakness, but I would never change anything once the picture is there. Then there are the sequences which you put in at the last minute like that great sequence with Colonel Patton, who later became General Patton.

Is that where he says his men are the greatest killers?

Yeah. I had already finished the film when somebody from one of the networks called and said, "Listen, I got this whole goddamn thing on Patton. He sounds goofy." So I went to have a look at it and said, "I want it." I then recut a whole segment of the film to include it although

we were just prior to mix. Later that sequence was lifted from the film and included in *Hearts and Minds.*

Somebody discussing your film said something like, "These films have the authenticity of history. This is history in the documents speaking for themselves." Now in most historical research one eventually lays out all the documents. A few people have said, however, that in Year of the Pig *they were very carefully selected. Those were some of the comments brought up when the film was shown at American universities. Do you think that's a fair comment?*

I think that is correct, but not necessarily fair. No one produces all the documents filmically. I think they confused the different pace between film and books. No one lays out all the documents in film—it's impossible. But what I have been willing to do (and my films have been seen by a lot of people who disagree with them) is to answer any questions as to where the stuff comes from and what the context is. I have a full text of where everything has occurred.

Roy Cohn appears in *Point of Order,* and we have become friends out of that animosity. He still attacks *Point of Order* and me personally. He still says the film is prejudiced (which it is) but he has never been able to find one distortion and he knows that text—all 36 volumes of it.

In your films, do you try to match an intellectual experience with your own human experience? For example, in Year of the Pig, *Ho Chi Minh and North Vietnam always come out like God and Kingdom Come. But you had not been to North Vietnam nor did you know that society through actual contact. Do you find yourself on the one hand challenging things about American society or a capitalist-European society, and on the other hand because of your politics accepting stuff from and about North Vietnam far less critically? Does it happen to you? Are you aware of it?*

Well, it's a war which I regarded from the beginning as being unjust on the part of the French and then ourselves. In Pauline Kael's review she said that Ho Chi Minh is the hero of the film and she is totally correct. Ho Chi Minh was meant to be the hero of the film. It was not an objective statement, but it was not a lie either. I mean there is a difference between being passionately involved in what you work with and believe in, and lying. There are no lies in the film—there are prejudices in the film. I wanted the Vietnamese to defeat the United States, and they did defeat the United States. The Vietnamese government, the DRV, is not the perfect government. There is no doubt that it is committing customary post-revolutionary excesses. There is no doubt that the restraining of various reactionary elements is harsh and there is no doubt that it does not conform to the luxury of democratic procedures which I prefer.

I believe, as a Marxist, with Marx who said, "Thank God I am not a Marxist." No one, not even Marx, not even Lenin has written holy writ. They way of change changes with time, place, circumstance. Marx found the way. It is up to us to apply it and in doing so to change it. I think you could have a genuine Marxist revolution in the United States without scrapping the Bill of Rights. I do not mean communism under the party of Gus Hall and run by the Soviet Union. Each country is a different situation. It adjusts in the arts. I think the Cubans have produced more interesting films than any other Marxist country since the Cuban revolution in 1959. There are no films in the East that can match *Memories of Underdevelopment* and some of the other Cuban films. And it is not an accident. I have been in those eastern countries, and they are very heavy, oppressive, stifling.

I think it's Pauline Kael who says that selections in your film are made to show the basic rottenness of America.

Absolutely.

She then goes on to say that you present a thesis that the whole West is collapsing.

I think that the West is fairly rotten. Collapsing is her word. I think that with our German and Japanese allies we are rather formidable.

The two key documentaries on Vietnam, besides the work of Ivens and Newsreel are In the Year of the Pig *and Peter Davis's* Hearts and Minds. *What do you see as the principal differences between your film and that of Davis?*

I would say there are substantial differences. The first difference is *when* they were made. It is a little luxurious to make a Vietnam film after the war, when it is safe enough. It is a different

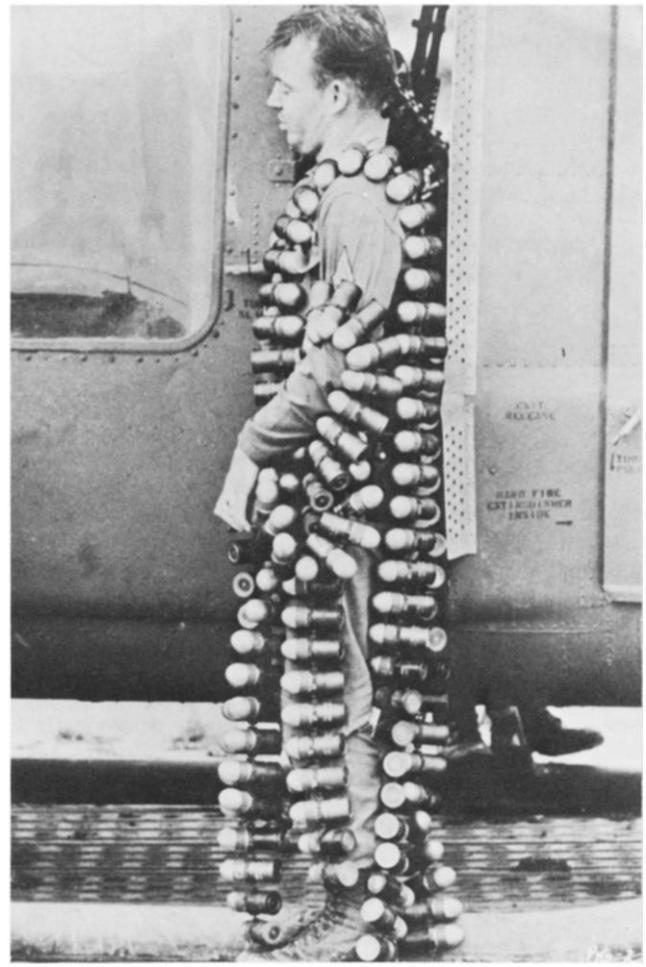
position, and it makes it even a different political position. But that's not the greatest weakness of Davis's film, because you can write a book about a war a hundred years after it's over and it will be totally valid. It's greatest weakness is its snideness. As somebody who has fought in a war, I cannot be very sympathetic to the treatment of that pilot from Linden, New Jersey. We see a sort of mocking Beverly Hills view of his mother, his family, that little schoolroom sequence, and the stupidity of the guy who said that he would go back and bomb Vietnam again.

That sequence to me betrays the political emptiness and the human emptiness of the whole enterprise. There is not one ounce of understanding of that person which means that you have no political understanding of this country. That person was a prisoner of the Vietnamese for seven years, which ain't exactly apple pie, and the fact that he was a full lieutenant in the navy, equivalent of captain, was a big class rise for him. We need to understand the nature of what we are involved in—and to laugh him off, to tick him off the way he was, is to avoid the real politics of what was in the film.

The rigged scenes in *Hearts and Mind,* like the whorehouse scenes, are just cheap. It's the old network mentality to manipulate people rather than film. In the football sequence, for instance, the coach and the players had no idea they were going to be used in a film about the war. They thought they were going to be used in a film about highschool football. Well, they are not the methods I would use, nor do I think they are particularly effective.

You criticize Peter Davis for making a film after the event, when the Vietnam war was almost over. Well, isn't your McCarthy film a little like that, or do you see McCarthyism and other excesses still rampant?

Point of Order was made seven years after the Army-McCarthy hearings took place. It was made because its lesson was forgotten; because it was something new; it was the first time a *film* had been made out of television's old and wavy images. The footage was manipulated, certainly. The point of *Point of Order* is that there was an ending to the hearings which the American people never saw. It meant the end of McCarthy because



IN THE YEAR OF THE PIG

the establishment pulled the rug out from under him and because those cameras ground on relentlessly for 36 days. It's not when a film is made but the passion and filmic energy that are brought to the film.

I objected to *Hearts and Minds* because even though it was made late in the war, almost as the war was coming to an end, it had no more perspective than US television and the latter didn't have much.

When I reviewed *Hearts and Minds* I said "Network television and Hollywood have always been uncomfortable with the documentary. The networks used to spew them out and give awards, like National 4-H Clubs, to one another; long White Papers, etc. They take place in Trotsky's dust-

bin—so objective, life is bleached out. Objective enough to be mindless, so that no sponsor or his grandchild should be offended. Hollywood's discomfort is more practical; it avoids them, finding Godfathers, Airports, Poseidons, and a kind of ritual cinematic cloning of the works of Fitzgerald, Hemingway, and Zane Grey more profitable. *Hearts and Minds* is the *Godfather* of documentaries. My guess is there is one big difference: it will never find an audience. I found it both heartless and mindless. Heartless because of an inability to understand either the United States or Vietnam. Heartless because it sneers with a japing, middleclass, liberal superiority when it should be doing something quite different. The distance between the more hip parts of Beverly Hills and Linden, N.J., is vast and those who made *Hearts and Minds* don't understand it."

Your most recent film is Underground. *What was the background to it?*

Well, there is nothing left from the sixties; little left of that youthful movement to whose cause I rallied, SDS, which at one point some people would say numbered 400,000, others 200,000. It was surely the largest radical movement young people ever put together in this country. Nixon destroyed the peace movement through two simple strokes; one was getting the middle class out of it by destroying the draft; and the other was to use violence which scared people. So in a very short period of time there were few people left who were willing to play for all the chips, and I liked that game myself.

I thought at first that the Weather people were ridiculous. I thought the bombing was silly. It had a certain kind of courage and panache that I liked, though I would not have done such a thing myself. But it was silly. But then they published *Prairie Fire* and to me it was such a reversal of the European experience and my own experience. Being characteristically pragmatic and American we developed techniques of street fighting and college destruction, and all of that. We did it all rather well *without any theory. Prairie Fire* was kind of an innocent exploration into *theory.* I interpreted it, whether rightly or wrongly, as a move out, away from bombing.

So when I read *Prairie Fire* I got in touch with them, and I suppose part of it was based on the challenge of middle-aged kicks. I went underground. It was hairy. It was dangerous. You have read the papers and know that the Weather Underground were the subject of the most intensive FBI scrutiny ever, as well as the most intensive FBI illegality. I met with them many times before recruiting Haskell Wexler and Mary Lampson.

What appealed to me was the whole idea of filming in impossible conditions; a film about people whose faces would never be on screen. All that appealed to me, and yet it is already dead. It was shot May 1, 1975, when the movement itself was splitting up. But that doesn't affect the film because a film always captures a moment of history at 24 frames per second and that is it. I am not interested in keeping up with it or doing an addendum on the Weather Underground.

I found them exciting, interesting people, curiously uneducated at one level and fantastically educated at another level. Anybody who can keep a group of 200 people underground without ever being caught—who can walk in the Capitol and stick bombs into it and get away with it—these are people who have more than average sensibility about what the country is all about. But you cannot exist just on the run, you need help, and they had help and have help. They have above-ground support, and they obviously function in the system somewhere.

When I first met them, we just went to restaurants and ate. It was very interesting, because I like my adrenalin charged. When the police came by the restaurant they were very cool. I was the one who got a kick out of it. But I didn't make the film for middle-aged kicks. I wanted one last report from the left, one last documentary, before I went on to what I am doing now.

IN THE YEAR OF THE PIG

How long were you out shooting?

Three days. We could have made that film even quicker, which was my original conception, only we listened to them about including certain things, We filmed above-ground, which was OK—that made sense. But then they wanted to go to the Martin Luther King hospital. Now rule one is you never go to racially mixed areas if you have people who are fugitives, because there are just too many police cameras, and we realized within five minutes of being there that we had to get the hell out. Luckily we were much faster than the police.

How did you manage to process material you wanted kept secret?

Haskell has a commercials company through which he put the film and it was processed over the weekend. I took the quarter-inch tape sound track to a soundhouse and said, "Look. This is a new kind of 'transactional psychoanalysis,' and I will pay you your regular rate if you will get out of here and let me transfer it myself. You see I have signed a contract with this shrink, and this stuff is confessions of men and women about their inner sex-lives, and the contract states that if anybody else hears it the contract is null and void." So the guy was perfectly happy to take my money and let me transfer. We were all done by Monday and everything was sequestered. Then the FBI started bullying us.

How did the FBI appear in this?

Well everything is slower for the FBI. They obviously took our pictures when we were at the Martin Luther King hospital, but they didn't process them until a few days later. Then the intelligence members of the police looked at them, and they saw Jeff Jones and Cathy Boudin and Haskell and Mary all together, and then this was turned over to the FBI. Within 48 hours the FBI was standing around pretending to change flat tires. They also began harassing a woman I was living with at the time who happened to be a totally apolitical person. She had no idea what I was doing. I didn't want to get her into trouble so I said, "I am going to be gone for three days, like a traveling salesman or something. But don't worry—I'll be back." Then they started investigating her mother and that kind of thing. So I got very angry and just called up the FBI and said, "Get your fucking gumshoes off my back!" That was a very good thing to do because it made them

UNDERGROUND: *"Middle-aged kicks"? De Antonio confronts America's most-wanted radical fugitives.*

angry and the FBI does not easily lose its cool. So they served us at once, and that was their mistake.

They served you with warrants?

They served us with subpoenas to appear before the Grand Jury. And I suppose the most important and notable political event in Haskell's or my life was the fact that we were the first people, along with Mary, who had the support of the whole Hollywood community. We were the only people to beat the system. I mean this goes back to the Hollywood Ten when the Hollywood community withdrew support at all the blacklisting, grey-listing—everything. We had the support of every star in Hollywood, every producer, every director. The president of the Screen Directors Guild came and read a statement which went into the Congressional record and the government simply withdrew the subpoenas. We had in the meantime hired three of the best lawyers in the country.

They subpoenaed you, just to talk to you and go through your material?

That is right, but there are certain things which we are guaranteed under the First Amendment of the Constitution. Under the concept of prior restraint they still had no right to go through our notes or unfinished material. If I committed a criminal act in making that film they could have attacked it when it was finished and projected on a screen, and then I would have had a right to defend it. Then their attack would have been legitimate—but to choke it off just after filming was a clear violation of free speech.

The free speech idea had been brought up to date to include film by a series of decisions from

the Supreme Court, and the fool-hearted FBI and the assistant district attorney for the southern district of California issued that subpoena too quickly. The subpoena said, you will bring with you all films, tapes, negatives, which is really odd, and this outraged the Hollywood film community. There was a lesson to be learned, that if you can home in on a narrow specific cause like a film, you can get the whole Hollywood community or X or Y community to support you. Many of the people who supported us were totally nonpolitical but just did not want to see film interfered with.

The one person among the supporters whom I admired and I wrote to was Elia Kazan who himself was not only an informer, but took a full-page ad in the *New York Times* in the fifties to list the names of all his friends who were communists. He knew what would be involved in coming forward to support us, and that his name would be splashed around the papers as a former pigeon who squealed, and who now supported our stand in making a film on revolutionaries. I thought his position took more courage than all the obvious Hollywood liberals who would have supported us anyway.

Was there a problem of gaining the trust of the people in the film? Did they limit or restrict your questions?

Well, much of the best part of the film, Mary and I cut out, which was the process of how we got to these answers. We eliminated all the give and take that is ordinarily the most dynamic and interesting part, because we wanted their voices to be heard didactically. They were, in my estimation, a little lunatic—or maybe overly puritanical rather than lunatic—about refusing ever to say "I." Finally I said to them (and we kept this in the film) "We are film people and this doesn't work. We have to be interested in who you are and how you got there. How does a middle-class American (and in some cases they were really super-upper-class American) get to call himself a communist revolutionary and go around blowing up buildings? It is precisely *that process* that is interesting."

They finally agreed but this took a whole night of arguing, and they would not talk about the town house explosion, nor would they talk about the capitol explosion. We had to stay up after the filming and go over tapes very carefully to see that they did not compromise themselves, and nowhere did they ever say that they bombed anything. They always say "the group" or "the organization" because one slip could become an indictment and could mean a number of years in prison. But that was not what motivated them as much as that they did not want to be regarded as egomaniacs or people developing the cult of personality. They wanted everything to be "it, the organization" and not individuals.

Mary Lampson, Haskell Wexler, and De Antonio in a mirror shot from UNDERGROUND.

The first two reels we shot were so boring that they were never used, because we were totally unaware of the fact that in their collectives they had a rule that no one could ever interrupt. They started speaking and went on and on. We were shooting color film, it was sort of crazy, and after two rolls I said, "What's going on? Why is this so damn dead? I ask a question and then you all sit and talk at great length and this is costing $120 a roll, and we have so far wasted $240 out of Haskell's and my pocket." So they said, "You don't understand. We never interrupt one another." And I said, "Well, I am going to interrupt you all the time when we cut this. You don't think we are going to let you make an eight-minute speech? Maybe I'll just take one sentence from all that." They got very wise but they still wanted to preserve what they had developed.

What sort of working agreement did you make?

The one agreement that we made was that we would never see each other again. We knew on both sides that that would be very dangerous because once the police knew that this film was done

there was no doubt that Mary, Haskell and I would become the object of very intense FBI surveillance and wire tapping.

They obviously had enough trust that you were not going to rip them off?

They knew me and my work, and they knew Haskell, and both Haskell and I were respectable middle-aged leftists. Mary had worked with me on three films and earned a few badges also. I took them to Haskell and Mary and they had long conversations with them and they passed on them both.

What was the import of Mary in the film?

She and I made it and Haskell was the cameraman. It was very hard for Mary and me, because Mary had worked for me in the past and now we were working as equals. And this turned out to be a very good thing.

Were you both asking questions?

All three of us were all questioning. But what was more important was that Mary and I determined the input of the film itself. We had hours and hours of stuff which we cut into an 88-minute film, and Mary and I did that equally. We had a lot of fights and a lot of arguments, and a lot of yelling at one another, because I had once been a boss figure, and she had been a worker figure, and there was the man-woman thing, and the middle-aged man and the younger person and all the rest of it, and it came out equal.

Was there any stuff you cut out, not because it did not work in the film but which you thought, given the circumstances, too dangerous for various reasons to put into the film?

Well we had a hairy life for a long time, because Haskell had trained himself for a long time to get the maximum clarity of image and the maximum subtlety and nuance. Suddenly he was being asked to obscure and defocus that image and he made a lot of mistakes. When we put the materials through the Steenbeck viewer, you could see faces so clearly that they could be put up on FBI posters. You have to remember that the FBI had not seen any of these people since 1969. So Mary and I would paint a little blue and have it go through the frame and shoot a new negative, and destroy the original negative.

This was the most time-consuming. You see, it was a film without any staff. Just two people. I have ordinarily eight or ten people working. We were the messengers, the editors, the directors, everything. Those Sundays we worked 14 to 16 hours, because we knew we would not be interrupted, and finally we destroyed everything revealing —every single frame. I used to drive out to my house in the country and get a big fire going and burn all that stuff, staying up half the night, with a drink in my hand, poking around to make sure that not one frame was left.

After all these 17 years of film-making, do you see these films or films like yours causing change or are they just making a statement? Are you hopeful or cynical about it all?

I am not at all cynical. I am skeptical about individual films changing the world. But there has never been anything, including organized religion, to compare with the media in this country. TV is on the air 21 hours a day and you can see what garbage is destroying the minds of our people.

When I came here you were looking at a piece on the evolution of young film-makers. You seem to be very supportive of young film-makers. What is the help you give them?

Political. Cinda Firestone who made *Attica* had a first job with me, and there are a lot of film people who started with me who are now doing their own work. That was because I learned as I was going along myself which made a good experience for them. I have been a curious employer in the past because I could never stand the sight of people around me who were not working. So I would just say, why don't you go to the movies, or go home, or something, but then I would expect them to work Saturday and Sunday and all night, if things were going well.

How do you advise young film-makers who are looking for money? You said you helped one guy get a grant of at least $84,000.

He got that from PBS, from the Public Broadcasting Service. It is very very hard and it is going to be harder. Let's face it, the source of money for radical film-makers in this country has been with the liberal movement which is no longer interested, and money is very hard if you are interested in radical or political films. And every disaster at the box office of pseudo-political films like

Memories of Justice and *Hearts and Minds* makes it harder for others.

But most of your documentaries made back their cost.

They made back their cost and they played in limited cities. We never had grandiose ambitions of playing them in a thousand theaters, which is what happened to *Hearts and Minds. Hearts and Minds* will make its money back in 16mm but it's going to take a long time to recoup. In the case of the Ophuls film, *Memories of Justice,* they will never make their money back.

Do you see yourself staying with documentaries?

I have always found documentary very interesting but there's a fictional film I want to do about my own life. It began as an obsession and I started thinking about it before we did the Weather film. It began with my suing the government under the Freedom of Information Act. I was into the Weather film but hadn't started shooting and suddenly got from the FBI almost 300 pages of documents collected by the FBI on my life up to my 24th year. But no documents were available after that except with a struggle and using two lawyers. Fortunately they are friends of mine.

The early pages were interesting and I cannot describe my feelings when I sat alone and read all the material collected before taperecorders and before computers. Material collected by some FBI guy who wrote it down on his little green pad, went back to his hotel and typed it all out. All this was initiated by my applying for flying school and a commission. And these hundreds of pages about me went back to the age of twelve, the year I went to prep school. They went to my mother who said Emile is an atheist and therefore he has no moral scruples. And to have that same sentence appear in a colonel's mouth . . . it gave me an eerie feeling and an angry feeling and then the anger went away.

So I am doing this story *cum* film very dispassionately, and I am doing it as a fiction, because of the libel laws. I have been advised by my counsel to do it that way because there are a lot of people in it who talked about me who I thought were my friends. But now it has become much bigger than that. I originally titled it "A Middle-Aged Radical as Seen Through the Eyes of his Government," but it is now something which is really my life—the whole damn thing!

Your films have a consistent leftwing view. You talk about yourself as being an early Marxist. Where do you think you are now? Do you belong to any recognizable group?

No, I haven't belonged to recognizable groups since I was a teenager, and I suppose I am now sufficiently cynical to think that I will not see revolutionary changes in my life time. I care most about change in this country, and if anything, I have probably become some kind of anarchist. I believe in strong violent responses. I find it curious that the Spanish communist party should be the most interesting communist party in Europe, and that the Soviet party should be the most deadening and oppressive. There is not much room, and it is very lonely here. There are very few people here who have left-wing politics. People share left-negativism and there is a big difference between negativism and real left politics.

There are a lot of people I know in $300 jackets with their Mercedes waiting outside, who will make snotty remarks about the peanut and about this country, but that's too easy. It is very hard, I think, to make those same remarks for the right reasons and to have something to say beyond. And that is where one gets stuck in this small no-man's, no-woman's land in which there are very few women or men who really see there is anything happening.

What do you see now, at this moment, as the vital and necessary documentary subjects for a film-maker?

To me the most interesting documentary would be about television itself. That's the ultimate pollution that we have, but there is no market for that. You know, couldn't get any money for it. It would play theaters, maybe, but TV would never play it because it would have to be hard the manipulation, the planning, the lies. *Network* was nothing compared to what it is all about. *Network* is an avoidance of the whole thing; the fighting for ratings, the amount of money moved, Barbara Walters, and children, and the concept for women.

If the woman's movement would look at television for five minutes as a woman, they would burn the fucking stations down. The idea is that women are nitwits, so therefore you give them gameshows all day and soap operas, and that sort of thing. The news comes on at six, the big news at seven, because that is when the man is home; that is

when the purchasing power and the king of the family is home, he has come off the train at Greenwich to hear Cronkite.

The news has become an industry. The news has grown from a half hour to an hour and a half and in some cases two hours, because the news now produces more income than anything else, and this is why the news cannot say anything. The news cannot offend anybody, that is why the news cannot analyze anything, and has to be sort of blanched out until it is a nothing that deals only in personalities. And this is why there is no investigative journalism.

You make a tube to place in the ground for the year 2078 and all you need is the TV page of the *New York Times* for one week with the TV material to go with it. Do that and you will see why this culture will drop like a ripe fruit, if there will be anybody to push it off the tree. The thing is we are so empty we don't even have the strength to knock this ripe fruit off the tree. It is going to hang on the bloody tree.

BEVERLE HOUSTON and MARSHA KINDER

The Losey-Pinter Collaboration

Film is a collaborative medium, yet little is written or known about the actual process. One of the most remarkable collaborations in recent times has been between director Joseph Losey and playwright Harold Pinter, resulting in three brilliant films and one extraordinary screenplay—*The Servant* (1963), *Accident* (1967), *The Go-Between* (1971), and *Remembrance of Things Past (The Proust Screenplay, 1977)*.[1] All four works focus on complex power struggles, yet they grow out of a harmonious cooperation that combines the unique talents of these two artists, creating a whole that is greater than the sum of their individual contributions.

Many who have worked with Losey claim that he is an unusually sensitive collaborator. The striking visual continuity of his films results partly from his cooperation with design consultant Richard McDonald with whom Losey has a "language worked out over many years, which is partly drawn and partly verbal,"[2] and from his own cinematic vision, of which McDonald says: "Joe has already planned his idea of how he's going to control the whole film before he walks on the set."[3] Editor Reginald Mills says that he and Losey work together "really rather by means of some mysterious telepathy. . . . I assemble the material in the way I think it should go, and fortunately nine times out of ten it's the way he imagined it anyway."[4] Dirk Bogarde, who starred in both *The Servant* and *Accident*, attests to Losey's subtle transmitting powers: "We work together without any words ever being spoken. I never ask him anything, he never tells me anything. It's completely a mutual marriage of minds.[5]

Though Losey and Pinter disagreed somewhat in their comments about their first collaboration, the same harmony soon developed in their relationship:

The Servant—Losey: Our finished film uses about one-fifth or a quarter of the original Pinter script written before I came into it.[6]

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modified and developed to a certain extent the first script.[7]

Accident—Pinter: He wanted to do it, and when I had read it I wanted to do it. I think we wanted to do it for the same reasons, We thought a lot about how it should be done, and worked together very closely.[8]

Remembrance—Pinter: We evolved a working plan and I plunged into the deep end on the basis of it. . . . For months I wrote and discussed the results regularly with my colleagues. . . . Working on *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu* was the best working year of my life.[9]

The works Losey and Pinter have created together far surpass their other films. Despite their visual continuity, Losey's films without Pinter are highly variable in quality, depending on the basic material. The weaknesses of his early works can perhaps be partly explained by the fact that he did not choose his own scripts (as in *The Lawless,* 1949, or the remake of *M,* 1950), or lost control of the creative process (as in *The Big Night,* 1951; *Stranger on the Prowl,* 1951; or *Eve,* 1961-62). In fact, he acknowledges that *The Servant* marked a turning point in his career: "By the time of *The Servant* . . . there was no longer a desire to make direct statements, no longer a desire to give solutions, a greater security with the medium, a greater sense of knowledge of the society I was dealing with, and far greater freedom than I had ever had before. And also subjects of my choice."[10] Yet even after *The Servant,* Losey went on to make films like *Modesty Blaise* (1966), *Secret Ceremony* (1967), *Boom* (1968), *Figures in a Landscape* (1970), *The Assassination of Trotsky* (1972), *Doll's House* (1973), *Galileo* (1975), *The Romantic Englishwoman* (1975), and *Monsieur Klein* (1976), which are more or less disappointing.

It is equally true that Pinter's best films have been directed by Losey. So far, Pinter's screenplays are film versions of his own plays, collaborations with Losey, or scripts written for other directors (all adapted from novels by other writers). *The Caretaker* (1962, directed by Clive Donner) and *The Birthday Party* (1968, directed by William Friedkin) are both good filmed plays whose strength lies in the basic conception and brilliant dialogue and acting, exactly as in the theater. *The Pumpkin Eater* (1964, directed by Jack Clayton) and *The Quiller Memorandum* (1966, directed by Michael Anderson), while still good screenplays, are less sophisticated in their basic conceptions and fairly conventional visually. Their unique strength lies in individual scenes of emotional intensity (like the beauty parlor and department store freakouts in *Pumpkin Eater*) or bizarre dialogue, as in this exchange from *The Quiller Memorandum:*

Quiller: At the end of the conversation he ordered them to kill me.
Pol: And did they?
Quiller: No.

The Last Tycoon (1976, directed by Jack Clayton) is such a disappointment that it is hard to recognize it as Pinter's work. When Pinter made his directorial debut, a film version of the highly acclaimed *Butley* (1974), he unfortunately left Simon Gray's script intact and chose limited visuals typical of most filmed stage plays. Only the films made with Losey are brilliant both conceptually and visually.

PINTER'S DRAMATIC SITUATION: ROOMS AND VISITORS

The Servant, Accident, The Go-Between, and *Remembrance* present a dramatic situation that Pinter described in the program for the 1960 performance of *The Room* and *The Dumbwaiter.*

> Given a man in a room and he will sooner or later receive a visitor. A visitor entering the room will enter with intent. If two people inhabit the room the visitor will not be the same man for both . . . A man in a room and no one entering lives in expectation of a visit. He will be illuminated or horrified by the absence of a visitor. But however much it is expected, the entrance, when it comes, is unexpected and almost always unwelcome. (He himself, of course, might go out of the door, knock and come in and be his own visitor. It has happened before.)

THE SERVANT: *Dirk Bogarde and James Fox*

All four works focus on a household (an expansion of Pinter's single room) into which come disruptive intruders who transform or are transformed by the interaction. The visitor, whether threat or victim, brings about a confrontation between self and non-self, perceiver and perceived, inner and outer reality. At a climactic moment, a character loses his innocence by intruding upon a sexual scene (the primal discovery), which either victimizes or corrupts him. In either case, his growth is stunted.

The Servant opens with Tony (James Fox) asleep in the empty house he plans to equip for elegant bachelorhood. When Hugo Barrett (Dirk Bogarde) arrives to be interviewed for the position of manservant, he must cough to wake the master. ("However much it is expected, the entrance, when it comes, is unexpected.") Later, when Barrett insinuates his "sister" Vera into the household, she, too, first encounters Tony by entering a room where he is sleeping. In the discovery scene, Tony and fiancée Susan come home unexpectedly to find Vera and Barrett in the master bed. Tony breaks down weeping; from this point on, his disintegration is inevitable.

Accident begins and ends with images of a country house, well kept and secure. The intruding events are represented by the loud sounds of a car crash, a violence that reverberates throughout the film and throughout the life of the main character, Stephen (Dirk Bogarde). The car was bringing two visitors, both students of Stephen—Anna (Jacqueline Sassard) who was driving, and the aristocratic William (Michael York) who is killed by her recklessness. Anna is an exotic foreigner who intrudes upon the complacent lives of Stephen and Charlie (Stanley Baker), middle-aged Oxford dons, and sets off a competitive struggle among the three men. The rhythm of the film is punctuated by visits: everyone comes to Stephen's house on Sunday and begins the complex set of interactions; Stephen visits Francesca (Delphine Seyrig), his former lover; out of guilt, he visits Charlie's wife (Ann Firbank), only to intrude grossly on her despair over Charlie's affair with Anna, as she waters flowers in the rain. The climactic intrusion takes place when Stephen enters his quiet house to discover Charlie and Anna, who have been making love upstairs. It's as if Stephen has discovered himself acting out his own

ACCIDENT: *Stephen visits Francesca (Delphine Seyrig).*

secret desires, as he has just tried to do with Francesca. Although he is victim in this scene, he begins to take vicarious pleasure in the adultery without having to accept any of the responsibility; by the end of the sequence, Stephen's worst nature has taken control.

The Go-Between focuses on two visits. Leo, the central character and narrator, visits Brandham Hall in the past as an energetic 12-year old (Dominic Guard), and in the present as a dried up

THE GO-BETWEEN

man of 60 (Michael Redgrave); both times he is victimized by the inhabitants. As in *Accident,* the film is framed by images of the country house that encloses and frames people and behavior, providing an elegant veneer that hides the underlying selfishness and corruption. The two women in the house are engaged in a conflict of wills: the beautiful young Marian (Julie Christie) uses Leo as a go-between in her illicit affair with Ted Burgess (Alan Bates), a local farmer whom she prefers to her aristocratic fiancé; in an attempt to save the family honor, her powerful mother Mrs. Maudsley (Margaret Leighton) traps Leo into betraying the lovers. In the climactic intrusion scene, Leo leads Mrs. Maudsley to the lovenest. Closer to the primal scene than the sexual intrusions in the other films, this discovery has Oedipal overtones: Ted is the surrogate father with whom Leo identifies, and Marian the seductive mother he desires. In one traumatic moment, Leo moves out of childhood innocence into corruption and betrayal. Both men are doomed; Ted commits suicide and Leo is traumatized for life.

After an opening montage of scenery and houses from his childhood, the *Remembrance of Things Past* screenplay cuts to eight-year old Marcel in his bedroom in the family summer home. Having been sent to bed for protection from the sexual gossip of one visitor, Marcel is now writing a note desperately pleading with his mother not to allow the present visit (from Charles Swann, an old friend of the family) to prevent their accustomed bedtime exchange of love. Though the father tries to discourage their unseemly affection, Marcel waits for Swann to leave and pulls his mother into his room, where she acknowledges their mutual love and agrees to spend the night. The rest of the screenplay is largely comprised of visits to and from Marcel. During these visits, usually to the homes of great aristocrats, he sits silently in the background; when other guests speak to him, they frequently intrude upon the intense observation of human behavior—especially sexual—which is his primary purpose. A number of sexual scenes are observed and heard by Marcel, usually involving homosexuality and/or infidelity. At 13, Marcel peers intently into the bushes where he hears the suggestive giggling of girls and meets the intense, seductive stare of Gilberte, Swann's 13-year-old

daughter; at 15, he watches the beginnings of lesbian love-making between a friend's daughter and her lover; at 17 he again watches Gilberte and her girlfriends in the bushes, but this time Swann watches him watch; at 20, he creates the opportunity to listen and watch Baron de Charlus have sex with a local tailor. These observations are prefigured by Swann, whose life is in many ways paralleled by Marcel's, when he goes to his fiancée's house late at night because he thinks she has another lover (possibly a woman); because he goes to the wrong house in the dark, Swann ironically misses observing the primal scene. Though Marcel remains largely sexually aloof, and certainly uncommitted, until the age of 41 when the screenplay ends, and though he is described in the opening scene (the visit to the Guermantes, which also closes the film) as having a "defeated" posture, the vicious social hierarchy and the sexual ambiguity do not absolutely truncate his growth. Instead, after meeting some of the beautiful children of the women of his generation, his voice-over tells us: "It was time to begin," implying that the great *Remembrance* can now be written (and in ironic circularity, has, of course, already been created).

PINTER'S ADAPTATIONS: COMPLEXITY AND MYSTERY

Despite the great differences among his literary sources, he manages to discover these Pinteresque situations in the material and to sharpen their outlines through amplifications, omission, and condensation. But at the same time, he adds an ambiguity that expands the meaning of the central conflict between intruders and hosts, making the adapted work peculiarly his own.

The screenplay of *The Servant* is much richer, yet at the same time much vaguer, than Robin Maugham's slight, 60-page story. Pinter omits the narrator and complicates the relationship between Tony and Barrett. We gain access to Tony's character only through inference from his interactions with Susan, Vera, and Barrett. Pinter mystifies Vera, Barrett's alleged sister, by omitting all information about her history and her feelings for Barrett and Tony. A replacement for the clearly defined Sally Grant, Susan is ambiguous in her relationship with Tony. We do not know how they met, how long they have been together, whether they have ever made love before, or how they really feel about each other. Pinter introduces two highly abstract scenes (the restaurant date where Susan tries to persuade Tony to fire Barrett and the young couple's visit to her parents' country estate) with conversations that are snide and strikingly Pinteresque, which make us wonder whether a conventional life with Susan would really be preferable to a decadent coupling with Barrett. Pinter makes the film equally Barrett's story. The focus is on the subtle shifting of power between the two men, in which Barrett is presented complexly and with considerable sympathy; he, too, is corrupted and declines as a result of the interaction. Much more so than in the story, Barrett's evil always remains nameless.

In *Accident,* Pinter adapts a full length stream-of-consciousness novel by Nicholas Mosley. Although the film does not use the conventional first-person techniques, we see things primarily through Stephen's point of view, which is established by the flashback structure; but we don't have access to his thoughts and motives. As narrator of the novel, Stephen was a highly sympathetic character, but the film audience is always uneasy about where to direct sympathy. As in *The Servant,* one of the most mysterious characters is the woman for whom the men compete. Pinter transforms the novel's Anna into a dark princess whose feelings and motives are never revealed. Silent, self-contained, her immobile face expressing little, she is perceived in a variety of ways—innocent schoolgirl, seductive Lady of the Lake, international *femme fatale,* and dying swan. The mysterious tension between the calm surface and the hidden conflicts is explicitly described in the Pinteresque dialogue that takes place on an idyllic sunny afternoon.

William: What are you working on?

Charlie: A novel. It's child's play. All you need's a starting point. Here for instance, on this lawn, what're we all up to? Describe to me what we're all doing.

William: Rosalind is sewing. Stephen's mowing the lawn. Clarissa and Anna are making a daisy chain.

Charlie: But you might add, Rosalind is pregnant; Stephen is having an affair

with a girl at Oxford. He's reached the age where he can't keep his hands off girls at Oxford. But he feels guilty so he makes up a story.

William: What story?

Charlie: Why this story, of course.

William: What do you mean? What are you talking about?

In *The Go-Between* the complexities are nearly all present in the literary source. Pinter's task is to pare down and mystify the romanticism of the novel. He eliminates the heavy-handed symbolism, which presented Leo as a serpent in the Garden of Eden who, reaching adolescence around 1900, romantically exaggerates his own importance by identifying his fate with that of the new century. In Pinter's hands, Leo becomes a passive vulnerable innocent whose "magic powers" we never take seriously; he does not share the social snobbery and corruption, but is mainly baffled by it. In the novel we are curious about the past as a source of the present. In the film the flashes forward are fragmented and puzzling, interrupting the linear movement of the past. The reflective narrator almost disappears, and we do not know that young Leo will be transformed into this gray, defeated old man.

To an even greater extent, of course, the subtle complexity of *Remembrance* was already present in Proust's original; the problem is primarily one of selection and it is Pinter's triumph to have maintained the wholeness of the novel in a kind of microcosm rather than selecting and omitting major elements. He consistently emphasizes the mysteriousness of Marcel's experience, particularly in the realm of sexuality and social obligation. He is never able to learn whether Albertine is a lesbian (as Swann could never learn the truth about his wife Odette). Albertine and others casually lie throughout the work, particularly about the urgency of social appointments, which they then ignore if they choose. Finally, it is often impossible to tell what effect experiences are having on Marcel; memory may reveal significance or impact that cannot be determined during the experience itself.

Pinter's adaptations deserve major attention in themselves, but all four works reveal that in his combining and eliminating characters, omitting explicit motive and explanation, and developing complex events and relationships, his goal is to preserve and enhance an impenetrable mysteriousness that he and Losey believe lies at the center of human experience.

LOSEY AND PINTER'S EXPERIMENTS WITH TIME

Time in cinema involves writer and director (with cinematographer, actors, and editor) in an elaborate dance where it's hard to tell who is leading. Moving from *The Servant*, which is basically linear with time shifting primarily through changes in visual style and cutting pace, through *Accident*, where the whole film is apparently contained in a flashback, to *Go-Between*, where the flashes forward are intermittent and unpredictable, Losey and Pinter reveal an increasingly innovative temporal choreography. Written between Pinter's two time-centered plays *Silence* (1969) and *Old Times* (1972), *Go-Between* reflects his growing concern with this element.

> I think I'm more conscious of a kind of ever-present quality in life. . . . I certainly feel more and more that the past is not past, that it never was past. It's present. . . . The only time I can ever be said to live in the present is when I'm engaged in some physical activity. . . . The whole question of time and all its reverberations and possible meanings really does seem to absorb me more and more.[11]

This view of temporal experience suggests that human interaction is a loop feedback system in which causality depends on where a person enters the circle of events and interactions.

The Servant begins punctually with the appointed meeting between master and servant; it ends at some unlocatable time when the power relationships have been reversed. The first part alternates between scenes involving Barrett and Susan, the two main competitors for Tony. The intensified competition is marked by rapid intercutting between Susan and Tony in the restaurant and Barrett bringing on Vera like heavy artillery. Once Vera begins working on Tony, the smooth linear pattern is resumed—only to be disrupted by the discovery scene. After the reconciliation between Tony and Barrett, it is no longer possible to tell what time has elapsed between the short sequences; it could be months or minutes. The power wheel has come full circle.

This circularity becomes even more subjective in *Accident*, which opens and closes with the car

crash that echoes through Stephen's mind. Through his flashbacks, the film explores the accident from the point of view of the past; the final return to the opening image implies its impact on his future life. The repetition also suggests that Losey and Pinter have broken open a moment in time—one chosen by accident. Although Stephen would say that his behavior (the rape) resulted from the accident, it might be argued that the accident resulted from Stephen's repressed and manipulating behavior. The scene where Stephen discovers Anna and Charlie is framed by two sequences that are most experimental in handling subjective time. When Stephen goes to visit Francesca, the discontinuity between the visuals and dialogue creates an innovative shift to a memory within a flashback. As we see an overhead shot of the two of them lying silently on their backs like corpses, blankly staring at the ceiling, we hear fragments of conversation.

Francesca: Have I changed?

Stephen: You're the same.

Since their lips are not moving, these words may have been spoken at any time during the evening; but the lies and deathly quality of the experience remain in Stephen's memory. After the discovery scene, Stephen visits his pregnant wife (Vivian Marchant) and tells her he plans to visit Laura, Charlie's wife. But the film intercuts between Rosalind and Laura, the simultaneity underlining Stephen's own identification with Charlie. As in the sequence with Francesca, emotional pressure requires a non-linear structure. Losey remarked:

> No stunt was intended at all, but simply two dialogues inter-cut in time and place; and at the end a deliberate sense that he is going to do—or is talking about doing—something he may already have done, which is part of his deception. If it seems a trick, then it's a failure; if it doesn't, then I think it's as much an extension of the medium as Picasso in his medium when he began to paint three or more aspects of the same face in one portrait. . . . I think in a curious kind of way the throwing away of rules by directors like Lester and Godard is a step in the same direction, perhaps a little less politely, and maybe a little less successfully in the long run in terms of lasting result than Resnais or Fellini, or maybe even me a little bit in *Accident*.[12]

The disruptions of linear time grow more frequent in *The Go-Between*. Brief scenes from the present (future?) are intercut with the past (present?); sounds from one scene overlap the visuals of another; sequences are difficult to isolate. During the opening image while young Leo and Marcus Maudsley ride through the idyllic landscape of the past, an adult voice observes: "The past is a foreign country—they do things differently there." We do not yet realize that this voice belongs to Leo grown old, in whose mind the memories are taking place. Just after Ted offers young Leo the information about sex that might enable him to understand Marian's baffling behavior, Losey offer us the first pairing of visuals and dialogue from old Leo's present, enabling us to recognize the flashes forward. The minds of young and old Leo are directly linked only when the boy performs a magic ritual with the Belladonna plant and the old man repeats the chant. Leo's traumatic discovery scene is framed by the conversation in which the dowager Marian tries to persuade old Leo to perform "another errand of love," this time with her grandson who looks just like Ted Burgess. Once more the past is put in the center of the present, creating a circular pattern of inevitability. The final moments between Leo and Marian in the present are interrupted by brief flashes back to Marian lying in the hammock dressed in white and Ted's dead body propped on the rifle. These images of deceptive innocence and real violence expose the bitter irony of Marian's cajoling charm: "You came out of the blue to make us happy and we made you happy." Her destructive self-delusion reflects the blind hypocrisy of the Edwardian era, imbuing the relationship between past and present with social signifi-

ACCIDENT: *Anna (Jacqueline Sassard) and Stephen.*

This experimentation with time must have provided some of the incentive for the highly ambitious task of bringing Proust to the screen. As

Pinter says in the Introduction, "The subject was Time," which is characterized by a double movement presenting at once the unpredictable, spiralling movement of experiential time and the ability of art to fix and retain time. If the screenplay as a whole can be seen as a flashback from the visit to the Guermantes that encircles it, then there are flashbacks and memories within flashbacks, flashes forward, and movements into time before Marcel was born. Sometimes, radical time shifts are based on subjective association, as when Marcel is kissing Albertine and the screenplay cuts to the earlier shot of Gilberte peering through the bushes, suggesting that past and present are one in actual experience. Other shifts involve events that are at first unlocatable in time, and are then exactly repeated in their (later) temporal contexts, suggesting a consciousness that has already experienced or been told about all the events and is placing them in a controlled way to show their significance for the consciousness that is the subject of the work—that of Marcel the developing novelist at work on his own experience. There are a number of images—best represented by the frequent shots of the yellow wall in Vermeer's *View of Delft*—that are repeated in montages throughout the film, which suggest that no time is ever lost, and that its chaos is susceptible to control and permanence through art.

LOSEY'S VISUAL STYLE

These temporally elusive films are also characterized by a mystifying gap between surface and inner meaning, which is greatly enhanced by the rich complexity of the visual texture. Losey's visual embodiment of Pinter's rooms makes them a living force in the drama. Images are framed by mirrors, railings, windows, arches, and doorways, suggesting that the environments, like the social rules, impinge upon and reshape the lives of the characters. In *The Servant,* frequent mirror shots explicitly reflect the changing triangles of power and sex. In the opening montage of *Accident,* we see images of Michael, Anna, and Stephen framed by the open door, shattered mirror and windows of the ruined car, further fragmenting our visual understanding of this already baffling event. Characters move in and out of doorways, pop their heads through open windows, bump themselves on low ceilings, and appear and vanish through narrow corridors. After Stephen discovers Charlie and Anna, the interiors of his house, especially the entrance hall, take on an even more intense life of their own as they are shot from a variety of odd angles, impeding, confining or exposing the inhabitants. When Stephen and his former lover Francesca are dining together, we see them through a rain-streaked window, evoking a romanticism that is ironically undercut by their miserable interaction. This undercutting also dominates the scene in *Go-Between* where Leo is left to amuse himself in the cathedral. The camera moves dramatically from vaulted ceilings down along columns, emphasizing the great volume and grandeur of space. But, ironically, all this is just filler for both Leo and the camera; the real action between Marian and Ted is going on secretly offscreen. In this film especially, the dark, impinging interiors are frequently emphasized by contrast with light, open shots of idyllic countryside. We see a long shot of Leo going through a lush, green landscape. Then, in the next scene, he steps through an enclosing gate into the defined space of Ted's farmyard, marking his entry into the psychological confinement of the intrigue. Tight pans, deep focus, and expressionistic lighting characterize the interior scenes of all three films, rendering them dense and complicated in contrast to the sweeping pans and natural light of the simpler exteriors. In the *Remembrance* screenplay, the party scenes at the beginning and end start with Marcel opening doors to enter a scene of over-dressed, over-powdered old aristocrats who suggest the grotesquery he meets as he enters upon most of the experiences of a life spent peering at parts of people and events through doorways, windows, railings, gates and bushes. The romantic illusions that impede his successful engagement with life are suggested in two scenes where he uses a magic lantern to adore the image of a beautiful ancestress of the Guermantes. Throughout the screenplay, Marcel sees images of himself and of Albertine and Andrée reflected in mirrors, windows, and doors, emphasizing the ambiguity of his sexual education and his inability to locate himself in his own experience.

Extreme camera angles are unusually significant in Losey's films, frequently shifting the mode

of reality and accentuating the absurd tone of Pinter's dialogue. In *The Servant,* when Tony and Susan visit her parents' country manor, the "elevated perspective" on the oddly positioned characters makes them resemble the classical statues that decorate the estate; it also heightens their smug ignorance and the surreal humor.

Tony: We're going to Argentina.
Mrs. Monset: That's where the ponchos are, on the plain.
Susan: Ponchos?
Mr. Monset: South American cowboys.
Susan: Aren't they the things they wear with the holes in the middle?
Mrs. Monset: They're called cloaks, dear.

In *Accident,* an extreme downward angle distorts the dons and their environment, deflating their self-importance as they sit in the reading room discussing sex and American college students (Charlie: "70% did it in the evening . . . and 0.4% during a lecture on Aristotle." Provost: "I'm surprised to hear that Aristotle is on the syllabus in the state of Wisconsin.") At the baronial manor of William, Stephen's noble student, the absurd contrast between the brutal rugby-like game and the formal, aristocratic environment is emphasized by an overhead shot revealing the lovely design of the black and white marble floor and classical statuary. In *The Go-Between,* an overhead shot is used to create a story-book world of romantic mystery as the beautifully gowned adults stroll back and forth on the porch, music and voices drifting upstairs to Leo and Marcus, tucked in bed in their separate child's world.[13] In all three films, camera angle and framing are used to present fragments of bodies, especially legs, abdomens, and headless torsos. Occasionally we are even presented with a view of the action shot from between the legs of a character. The Proust screenplay suggests many possibilities for similar visual choices, as when Marcel ascends from floor to floor in an open elevator cage. These odd shots remind us that our knowledge is always incomplete.

Pinter's almost absurd reductionism in dialogue and characterization complements the dense mystery of Losey's visuals:

> We all have our function. The visitor will have his. There is no guarantee, however, that he will possess a visiting card with detailed information as to his last place of residence, last job, next job, number of dependents, etc. Nor, for the comfort of all, an identity card, nor a label on his chest. The desire for verification is understandable but cannot always be satisfied. There are no hard distinctions between what is real and what is unreal, nor between what is true and what is false. The thing is not necessarily either true or false; it can be both true and false.[14]

Despite the complexity of detail, motives and events are never fully explained. Though there is always something important to be discovered beneath the civilized surface, it can never be completely known.

GAMES

Ironically, this harmonious collaboration of playwright and director results in a series of works in which human interaction is dominated by competitive games. The goal is always survival, power, or control over one's own experience. The source of this power (and its rewards) may involve social ascendance, sex, superior knowledge, or aesthetic power. Each work emphasizes a different dimension of gaming, which is indicated by the title and the literal games being played, and which is developed both narratively and visually.

In *The Servant,* Tony and Hugo are the primary players in a sadomasochistic game in which they reverse their roles of master and servant. The women, Susan and Vera, may pose as players, but they are actually pawns, fluidly embodying a variety of roles depending on what is needed by the man who is "moving the piece." Like the

THE SERVANT: *Susan (Wendy Craig), Hugo (Dirk Bogarde) and Tony, the object of the game (James Fox).*

princess Anna in *Accident,* Tony is the desired object for the other three characters, who are trying to gain sexual control over him. Hugo, on the other hand, is the most skillful player, easily manipulating the other three. Just as the characters don't understand each other's behavior, we don't know anyone's full motivation. The audience is forced to play the same game as the characters—trying to make things out within a limited field of observation. Unlike the other films, *The Servant* is not dominated by one character's point of view. The power dynamics are laid out in the opening scene where Hugo catches the wealthy master asleep. When he awakens, Tony admits: "I'll need everything, general looking after, you know." He doesn't yet know he's in a game although he's the one with most to lose. In contrast, Hugo is aware of the game from the beginning; by freeing Tony from every menial task and anticipating every whim, he can feed his dependency and gain control of his house as well as his mind and body. Later, when Hugo gets rid of Susan and replaces her with Vera, Tony still thinks that he and Vera are playing hide and seek behind her brother's back, but Hugo is playing "Mister, you can do it to my sister for a price." Once the female decoys are out of the house and out of the picture, the male couple settles down to the real games and the actual stakes. Like an old married couple, Tony works on a crossword puzzle while Hugo nags him to get a job. Reversing the initial situation, Tony enters the room and finds Hugo asleep; they yell and wrestle, and the insults finally become a matter of social class:

Tony: You creep. You're a peasant.

Hugo: I'm a gentleman's gentleman, and you're no bloody gentleman.

In Losey's favorite scene, Tony and Hugo play ball on the stairs. They squabble about the rules, and Tony hits Hugo in the face with the ball, initiating the physical contact they have both desired. Their relationship grows more explicitly erotic in the final game of hide and seek. The scene opens with a profile shadow of Tony's face behind the shower curtain. Hugo creeps upstairs, calling "'Puss puss puss, here pussy." When the camera cuts back to the shadow of Tony's profile, his nose is longer and his face distorted, expressing his fear as he hides in the shower. Hugo approaches: "You've got a guilty secret . . . but you'll be caught . . . I'm coming to get you . . . I can smell a rat." When he finally exposes Tony, the faucet is dripping as it was in the earlier sex scene between Tony and Vera, who has been a sexual go-between for the two men. Even after Barrett has assumed the role of master, the women try to regain control over Tony, but they are no match for Barrett and the feelings he has aroused in Tony. The outcome of the power struggle is visually expressed in the shot from the top of the stairs where Tony's huge, wasted face is caged in by railings. Susan is running downstairs in the left midground, while Barrett, a small figure enclosed within the bannisters, waits to usher her out of the house. Although he is the winner, Hugo is also trapped in the game.

As the title suggests, in *Accident* the primary game is how to manipulate misfortune to serve one's own advantage, minimizing the risks and maximizing the gains. This time we watch the game of chance as if we were sitting behind Stephen at a poker table, seeing what he sees but not necessarily interpreting the moves as he does nor hoping that he wins the hand.

For Stephen, the desired payoff is to assert his masculine power in the face of encroaching middle age. His specific goals are to screw Anna and get on TV, both of which will allow him to compete successfully with Charlie. In pursuing these desires, Stephen runs the risk of losing his family, respectability, and self-esteem. His main adversary is his close friend Charlie, who desires the same payoff but is willing to assume the costs. Charlie is Stephen's equal in class, profession, age, and situation, but Charlie seems to be winning; he's the one who has the published book, the TV show, and the affair with Anna. Yet he is losing his wife and children; his feelings for Anna are out of control. Like Tony, he is childishly vulnerable because he is not fully aware of the nature of Stephen's game. Adversary of both Stephen and Charlie, William wants to marry the princess. Naturally superior in youth, beauty, class, wealth, physical strength, and innocence, he is nevertheless a vulnerable child victimized by everyone. While Anna is the object of the three-way competition among the men, she has an independent power struggle with each. It is impossible to tell

what her goals are. Perhaps she's merely interested in exercising her sexuality, which is the source of both her isolation and her power.

As in *The Servant,* the game is played with imperfect information for both participants and audience. The film begins with a random event—an accident—which is the climax of the game; Stephen knows this but we don't. This event will give Stephen his chance at Anna, and he knows how to take advantage of it. But it doesn't happen now. The structure of the film implies that before he can do it, and before we can understand it, we must be privy to the earlier moves. The game begins when Stephen learns that William is romantically interested in Anna, which makes him aware of his own attraction to her. While playing chaperone to the young couple on a romantic boat ride, Stephen is humiliated as he is knocked into the water while William maneuvers the boat (and the situation) with a long pole. Recovering from this defeat, Stephen makes his first move by inviting them to his house—maximizing his pleasure with Anna's presence on his home territory, yet minimizing the risk to his security by including William as a cover. At the Sunday party, the audience is also drawn into the game; when we see Anna lounging with Charlie, who has "accidentally" dropped by, we must consciously rearrange our sense of coupling and begin to suspect (perhaps before Stephen) that Charlie is his true rival. Later, at dinner, when Anna offers to drive home instead of drunken William, Charlie says: "You haven't got a licence," implying he knows her better than Stephen or William.

The Sunday luncheon provides the first battleground where all the adversaries are assembled and where the games become explicit. During this sequence, we get every possible grouping of the characters. At one moment Charlie, who is outside with Anna, throws a ball through the window to William, who is inside with Rosalind and Stephen. This challenging move seems to line up the insiders against the outsiders (Charlie and Anna), providing another clue to their secret connection. In the tennis game, the alliances shift before our eyes. The first pairing—William and Anna *vs.* Charlie and Stephen—presents the socially appropriate appearance. Then the sides

ACCIDENT: *William (Michael York) and Anna.*

change—Charlie and Anna *vs.* Stephen and William—strengthening our growing awareness of the underlying game reality. This shifting game of matched doubles ultimately leads to the final playoff between Stephen and Anna, which frames the film. But at the Sunday party, Charlie is the apparent victor, outdrinking William at the dinner table and outmaneuvering Stephen, who fearfully carries the passions aroused by Anna to the bed and bosom of his pregnant wife.

Once again, defeat rouses Stephen to cautious countermoves that fail to satisfy him, which are presented in modes of reality different from the rest of the film to emphasize their compensatory nature. He visits the TV producer, whom he fails to see, and is doubletalked by his assistant (played by Pinter himself); he then settles for substitute adultery with Francesca. The inadequacy is made all the more painful when he returns to discover Charlie and Anna in his house. At this low point, Stephen realizes Charlie's vulnerability and suddenly reverses the power positions. Revealing nothing of the day's failures, Stephen remains cool. He cooks himself an omelette and then goes upstairs for the vicarious pleasure of examining the bed. Embarrassed, Anna tries to smooth the covers; Stephen orders her to stop, revealing his first power over her in an intimate situation, and his underlying cruelty and vindictiveness. The discovery completes the identification which Charlie had initiated on the Sunday visit, and strengthens the alliance between the two rivals, who are now mutually dependent. The identification is also strengthened by the intercut visits to the wives; Stephen can vicariously enjoy Charlie's sin while

at the same time remain the faithful husband who talks against adultery. Meanwhile, his own infidelity with Francesca is minimized; all the guilt falls on Charlie.

Despite his devious victory over Charlie, Stephen is still reluctant to play explicit games. Although he feels confident enough to challenge William on his home turf, Stephen has to be forced into playing goalie in a brutal game, which exposes the gap between the civilized surface and the underlying violence. Finally, William is the one who is injured, foreshadowing his death, which Stephen will manipulate for his own advantage. Between the indoor scrim and the fatal accident, William has a brief victory in a cricket game, outplaying the puffing Charlie while Stephen watches comfortably from the sidelines. The love game seems to parallel the action on the field, for Anna tells Stephen she intends to marry William and asks him to tell Charlie the bad news. Stephen is pleased, preferring William, a born victim, to Charlie, Stephen's primary rival.

At this moment of Stephen's strength, we return to the accident, where we must apply our new knowledge. A true opportunist, Stephen hides Anna, anticipating some possible gain even before he knows his plans. Excited by her helpless shock, he rapes her. The next morning he visits his wife and new baby in the hospital, assuring her (and himself) that their security is intact. Anna has lost all three lovers, but we have no idea what this means to her. As Stephen predicted, the doomed William has lost the most. Charlie has risked more than Stephen and lost it all. Stephen has maximized his payoffs—triumph over Charlie, sex with Anna—and has minimized his losses, but in the process he has ruined three lives and shaken several others, his own included.

In *The Go-Between,* Leo is a naive child (literally, not figuratively like Tony, Charlie, and William) who, caught in games he does not understand, turns to magic and pretends to have powers that Marian pretends to envy. Years later, in trying to arrange her grandson's marriage, Marian continues to call on Leo's impotent magic while forcing him to resume the game of go-between.

Go-between is a favored game in all three films and the Proust screenplay. One male character acts as intermediary in a relationship between a woman (to whom he himself is attracted) and another man or woman who could be his friend, alter ego, or lover. Barrett is a go-between for Vera and Tony, but the heterosexual affair he creates is actually a cover for the men's homosexual relationship. Stephen plays a similar role between Anna and her two rival lovers, yet actually uses both of them to disguise and further his own desires. In *Remembrance,* Marcel is lover to Albertine but profess his love for Andrée, with whom he becomes "friends," thus functioning as a kind of sexual or romantic go-between for the two women.

In *The Go-Between,* Leo is an innocent version of Stephen, caught between two sets of opponents: the two rivals, Ted (Marian's lover and social inferior with whom Leo identifies) and Hugh (the aristocratic fiancé whom Leo greatly admires); the two women, Marian (to whom he is sexually attracted) and Mrs. Maudsley (whom he must obey like a surrogate mother). From Ted he hopes to learn about sex, and from Hugo about honor. This parallels a similar conflict between passion and convention represented by the women. Instead of an upper-class loser, as in *The Servant* and *Accident,* the main victims in this film are Ted the farmer and Leo the go-between, both social inferiors. But the conflict is also drawn sharply across sexual lines. Among the other men, Hugh's honor is wounded and the grandson's blood is tainted. It is the women who have all the victory, however hollow. When Leo asks the adults to explain a novel he's been reading where a man fights a duel to protect his wife's honor (he wonders why *she* doesn't fight the duel), Hugh informs him: "Nothing is ever the lady's fault."

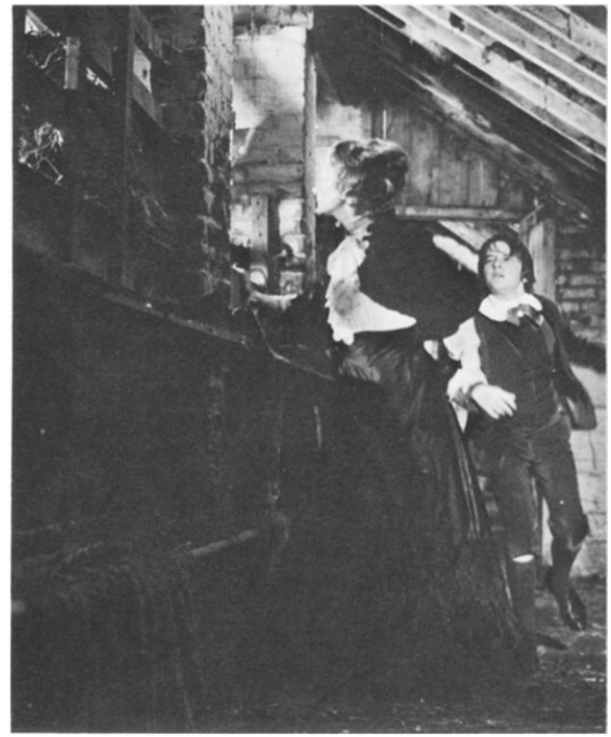
In Leo's first glimpse of the adult world, he sees elegantly dressed figures playing croquet on a finely trimmed lawn; meanwhile, he and young Marcus play a rough and tumble version of hide and seek on the stairs (like Tony and Hugo in *The Servant*). The contrast is thus immediately established between the apparent graces of conventional society and the natural energies and struggle of the human animal (as in the scrim in *Accident*). Later, in a cricket match, Leo observes the contrast between Ted's brutish strength and Hugo's "command and elegance." When he is called into the game, he puts Ted out and saves

the game for the aristocrats though he doesn't understand the significance of his action. All he knows is that he is momentarily a winner. But his triumph is short-lived, like William's in *Accident.* He is immediately confronted by Ted and Marian, who force him to resume his duties as go-between. Later, when Mrs. Maudsley forces him to lead her to the lovers' hiding place, once more he "catches Ted out" for the aristocratic team. This game is played within the broader rules of Edwardian society—rules so powerful that they can make a wild man like Ted Burgess commit suicide and a passionate girl like Marian give up the man she loves. Mrs. Maudsley, the evil parent, represents the conventions of society that deny emotional and psychological reality, assuring that things are never as they seem.

In *Remembrance of Things Past,* while the function of actual games is reduced, various lines of competition weave the basic tapestry of Marcel's life: between men and women, among social classes, among the men, and between youth (innocence) and age (experience/corruption). Though Marcel is at first loved and protected by his mother, grandmother, and Françoise, the old family servant, he develops a life-long dependency on them. His early romantic adoration of unattainable women also weakens his ability to choose or love the right women. Tormented all his life by his inability to see or understand their behavior, he is always vulnerable to women, who know this and victimize him with their infidelity, their social unattainability, and their lying. The competitive power of women is emphasized by the fact that the explicit games, such as golf, are assigned only to them; their version of "follow the leader" epitomizes Marcel's idea of their strength:

> The little band of GIRLS walking along the front. They keep to an absolutely straight, remorseless course, appearing not to see those in their path. Some people make way for them automatically, some with a slight panic. The GIRLS ignore them and proceed with an arrogant assurance, occasionally jumping over an obstacle. One of the GIRLS springs onto the platform of the bandstand and jumps over an old man, sitting underneath it in a deck chair. His cap is brushed by her feet. He looks up, terrified. The GIRLS laugh and applaud.[15]

Marcel's access to the women he really wants is also impeded by the social and sexual competition among the men. Twice he asks men—one older and successful, the other his age but of a higher social class—to introduce him to women and twice he is refused for no apparent reason.



THE GO-BETWEEN: *The discovery scene.*

Class competition pervades the screenplay. Almost every visit involves discussion of the relative status of the Queens, Barons, Dukes, Princes and lesser gentle persons at the gathering. Although powerful in other ways, women are often the victim of this hierarchy as actresses are scorned for their alleged promiscuity, Swann's wife is ostracized for lack of social standing and alleged sexual activity, and Francoise works against the marriage of Marcel and Albertine for these reasons. This vicious hierarchy is superbly parodied in a scene where Marcel's grandmother has to use the public bathroom in the park, which is presided over by an attendant named "La Marquise," who declares: "I choose my customers. I don't let everyone come into my little parlors."[16]

The exploitation and corruption of the young by the old, and of art and artists by their rich consumers, forms a subtle, important thread throughout the screenplay. The ancient composer

Vinteuil is made ridiculous in the eyes of the world by the lesbian affair between his daughter and her music teacher; his works become the means to social advancement for the Verdurins, who offer performances that draw aristocrats who would otherwise never enter their home. The Baron de Charlus tries to form a homosexual liaison with Marcel by promising him wonderful material for a book from his lifetime of social and sexual intrigue, and the old ambassador who wouldn't introduce Marcel to the Duchesse de Guermantes tries to teach him what kind of books will make it in the upper-class literary game.

But although Marcel suffers the emotional and sexual impediments of the other Losey/Pinter "heroes," his ability to make art from his experience, like Vinteuil's music and Vermeer's painting, successfully transcends these competitive, destructive games. Marcel's final triumph is to make a work of art in which his own baffled vulnerability provides the greatest source of strength and value. Similarly, Losey and Pinter use the subject matter of bewilderment and power lust to build the unique collaboration from which has emerged these subtle and powerful works of film art.

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2. Tom Milne, *Losey on Losey* (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1968), pp. 107-108.
3. Richard McDonald as quoted in *Isis* (Feb., 1964), p. 18.
4. Reginald Mills, in *Isis*, p. 24.
5. Dirk Bogarde, in *Isis*, pp. 29-30.
6. Joseph Losey, as quoted in "Josephy Losey and *The Servant*," Jacques Brumus, *Film* (number 38), p. 28.
7. Harold Pinter, in *Isis*, p. 18.
8. Harold Pinter as quoted by John Russell Taylor, *"Accident,"* *Sight and Sound* (Autumn 1966), p. 183.
9. *The Proust Screenplay*, p. x.
10. *Losey on Losey*, p. 48.
11. Mel Gussow, "A Conversation (Pause): From an Interview with Harold Pinter," *Performing Arts*, VI, No. 6 (June 1972), 25-26.
12. *Losey on Losey*, pp. 118-119.
13. Few actual shots are indicated in the *Remembrance* screenplay, but in one scene the camera is directed to look down on Marcel as he bends over weeping after the death of Swann (although we are not sure this is the cause of his tears) as he earlier did at Balbec after drinking too much brandy because of his separation from his mother.
14. The program of the 1960 performance of *The Room* and *The Dumbwaiter*.
15. *The Proust Screenplay*, p. 41.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 73.

KAREN JAEHNE

Istvan Szabo: Dreams of Memories

"Shall I carve on the tree 'I am here' or 'I was here'?

—Character, *Budapest Tales*

Istvan Szabo was born in 1939 into a Budapest family of doctors. As with many other Hungarians his age, memories of hunger and scavenging, bombing and hiding during the long siege of winter, 1944, provided the detonation point for later development. In 1956 Szabo began studying at the Academy of Theatre and Film Art and received his diploma in 1961. He made two shorts as a member of the Bela Balazs Studio after his diploma work. His first feature film was *The Age of Daydreaming* in 1964, a story of his own generation and their discontent. It is burdened with French Nouvelle Vague influence to the point of cinéma-manqué rather than -vérité. Andras Balint plays himself—or rather the self-image of Szabo—as a young man whose desire to travel, need for friends, difficulties with the opposite sex, etc. are very reminiscent of the teamwork of Truffaut and

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Vinteuil is made ridiculous in the eyes of the world by the lesbian affair between his daughter and her music teacher; his works become the means to social advancement for the Verdurins, who offer performances that draw aristocrats who would otherwise never enter their home. The Baron de Charlus tries to form a homosexual liaison with Marcel by promising him wonderful material for a book from his lifetime of social and sexual intrigue, and the old ambassador who wouldn't introduce Marcel to the Duchesse de Guermantes tries to teach him what kind of books will make it in the upper-class literary game.

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Jean-Pierre Léaud. There is, in fact, a small tribute to Truffaut within the film: a girl dashes across the screen carrying a placard for a Truffaut film. Although *The Age of Daydreaming* remains a minimal interpretation of a black-and-white reality suffering under French influence, it establishes some of the recurring themes and imagery of Szabo's later films—image of the missing father, role of the inspirational woman who remains a dream, dreams themselves trying to realize themselves, persecution, the social role of the doctor, Hungarians going into and remaining in exile. Even if *The Age of Daydreaming* is more about film-making than any other film of Szabo, it has neither the psychological wit nor the historical components typical of his art. The four succeeding feature films record the emergence of Szabo as one of Europe's most important directors, prominent for the quality rather than quantity of his work.

In the two years until 1966, Istvan Szabo's own dreams became more integrated into patterns of history, and his style ripened into colorful, well-paced meditations on the frustrations of the common man. He says about this period: "At first we thought we would make films about ourselves, about our problems, by just taking a camera and collecting our lives on film. But that was just recording, and it wasn't enough. I wanted to interpret these experiences, give them meaning."[1]

In 1966 he made *Father* about a boy's search for his dead father. A warm, tolerant humor is immediately visible in this film which developed into a gentle irony over Szabo's next ten years (a humor hard to read between the subtitles). A young boy's fantasies about a heroic father lead to a chase scene on a motorcycle, over fences, around corners, dodging Nazis—possibly the result of Buster Keaton on an impressionable mind. A piece of *The Great Dictator* is cut into the film along with the corresponding newsreels in a sequence marking the boy's birthday celebration. The newsreels not only establish the fictive time within the film, but depict Budapest in the crucial years at the end of World War II, an image that haunts every Hungarian film. The footage from the end of the war establishes the type of atmosphere that fosters the heroic image of father as partisan fighter, or doctor saving lives in the rubble of Budapest. The father's watch and medical bag are symbols integrated into the plot of *Father:* close-ups of them and camera shots from every angle gradually lend them a life of their own. As inherited objects, they trigger a child's fantasy; when he is old enough to wear them, they suffer the shocks and attacks he suffers, and his conscience prompts him to keep them in good repair. In a scene following newsreel footage of the 1956 uprising (Andras Balint plays the matured version of the young Tako), Tako discovers that his father's watch has been smashed in a surprise attack in the streets. He immediately rushes to repair it and comes back to pick it up the next day. The wife of the watchmaker doesn't know which watch Tako wants, so she allows him to sort through the pile by himself. The camera focuses on the confusion of watch faces, all telling a different time, then discards one face after another until the very watch that we have seen in two previous close-ups emerges from the bottom of the pile. The watch is not especially beautiful; it's a simple, useful watch, but Tako has individualized it in his mind. This becomes clear when the viewer realizes he doesn't know what to look for in that pile of very ordinary watches. The presence of so many repaired watches somehow universalizes this experience, and this scene is indeed the fulcrum between the fantasy of the father's image and the search for the historical human father.

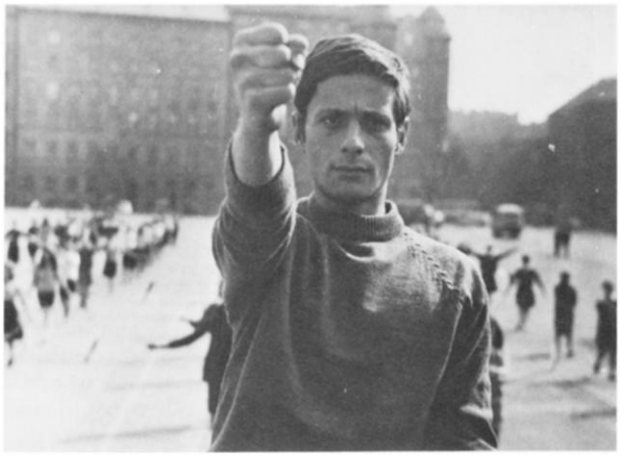
Szabo's FATHER.

Tako's alienation from other boys with fathers is carefully established in group shots where Tako barely fits into the frame. His need for recognition—for fitting in—drives him to find out exactly who the man was. In this search Szabo incorporates the tactics he learned from Nouvelle Vague film-makers with his own ingenious story-telling. Tako seeks out people who knew his father and

listens to their sometimes contradictory accounts of his father, the doctor. The camera searches along with him; in revealing wide-angle close-ups Tako interviews people who don't enjoy their memories of the war until the camera moves back in the satisfactory realism of half-shots. The psychological detail of Tako's obsessive search doesn't stop at the personal history of one boy's need. Szabo commented on the subject: "After the war, many fathers were dead. Not just one little boy sought out a father. Whole nations, countries, people created fathers, if they didn't have strong leaders. Stalin, Churchill, Roosevelt—people make fathers out of their leaders—or vice-versa?" So the newsreel footage at the opening of *Father*, announcing Roosevelt's death, is incorporated to prompt us to apply this story to historical processes.

Szabo's concern for history could not be considered political in the sense of providing a political perspective on Hungary. What he does show is how historical events and social convulsions affect individuals and how, in turn, his story is the abstraction of the repetitive individual stories. The ultimate generality makes an impressive ending for his next film, *Lovefilm*, in 1970. The love story is not the focus of the film, but the aim and dream, as a father was the goal in *Father*. Szabo investigates an impossible love, a love inextricably conjoined by the cruelties of war and its aftermath of social reforms. The maturing of childhood sweethearts is not, however, the subject of the film. What is a leitmotif in other films is the focus of this one—Hungarians in exile. An inseparable pair of children are severed by the escape and exile of Kata. It's a subjective story, told from Jancsi's point of view, once again portrayed by Andras Balint; Judith Halasz was the perfect star for 1970, sporty but wistful, blonde and blue-eyed, doll-faced but tough. In close-ups she is the child of Jancsi's memories, but when the camera dollies around her, she is the object of adult desire.

The problem of *Father* is the opening crux of *Lovefilm*. Jancsi has no father; Kata does, and in the opening scene he states that he held her somehow responsible for the death of his father. Nevertheless, she remains an eternally recurring dream of childhood love, escape, travel, continuity. Jancsi's opening words, "I still dream about her,"



LOVEFILM

begin a series of memories and reveries, interrupted at regular intervals by border controls and train conductors. Szabo's technique of repeating an actor's movement three times, like the stuck record of a memory, with possible fish-eye distortion or fast and slow motion, occurs in *Father* as the only memory the boy has of his father: a series of zooming motions as a man with dark-rimmed glasses closes in with arms spread to swoop him up. In *Lovefilm* this technique provides variations on a fantasy that balances between dream and memory. Kata, with beautiful bare arms, whirls around to greet him on a station platform—a memory or fantasy that needs investigation. Loving Kata from childhood has created a fascination with her as a woman, a woman to be rediscovered; this complex camera work of Kata spinning happily on the platform prompts memories and metaphorically separates the Kata he loves from the Kata whom he cannot possibly have. And as his hopes fade, the camera comes to a stand-still.

LOVEFILM

A visit to Kata in Frejus is the backbone of the narrative structure. Flashbacks during the train trip provide a complete history of their common childhood, shared anxieties, and separation when Kata decided to flee. Her telephone call—filmed as a frontal challenge—begging Jancsi to come with her is twice repeated. Why she has fled or, for that matter, why he hasn't, remains unclear. Szabo treats such separations as historical inevitabilities. In his films, people are drawn out or forced out of their homes by Great Events over which they have little control, just as they have little control over their own impulses and obsessions. When Jancsi arrives in Frejus, expecting a swirling Kata on the platform, he is disappointed. In the bleached heat of southern France, another Hungarian in a dour dark suit meets him. The matter-of-fact reality of this world is depicted. in faded or bleached light. The dominant color is a sweet turquoise in Kata's apartment, Jancsi's refuge, while the demands of her job occupy her time and her mind. She cannot sacrifice her career at the demand of love. This is the West, Capitalism, and another of the contrasts drawn in this film.

Lovefilm does not investigate the causes for emigration out of Hungary, but draws a very accurate portrait of a weeping, displaced bourgeoisie, intermingling, intermarrying but never thoroughly absorbed. The fact that Jancsi remains in his own country seems thoroughly accidental—a human and political error. In one scene, his parents bawl out, in frustration: "Where? We had no place to go." Szabo is very interested in how people then cope with such inadvertent or indirect decisions. In conversation, he said:

> Political? What is political? I don't create ideologically. And I don't want to tell people how to think or what to see. If we look always at the political side, we forget the human side. A man is more than a political creature. His passions are more interesting to me than shooting films about economics and historical data. That's why I'm so happy when somebody talks about the pictures and the colors once in a while. In *Lovefilm* Kata wants to be with this man whom she has always loved, but there is a distance between them by virtue of this border or many borders that makes their desires impossible.

In *Lovefilm*, Jancsi is as much bound to the world of Budapest by his childhood horrors as by his family ties. The scenes of shuffling the children into an air-raid shelter, the empty lot where they skated as children, their persecution and accusation by the Young Pioneers identify the confining character of the city, but they are also identification marks for Jancsi. Kata's great influence on Andras has been to force him to defend what is his. As children, in the first scenes, she is intent upon taking his knapsack from him. Later when they are accused of being in love, she is rebellious enough to stand up to their persecutors in the Young Pioneers. Ultimately, her femme fatale quality could be fatal for a man like Jancsi, if her strength forced him to sever his ties to home, to abandon an identity derived from Budapest's as well as his own history. In an amusing scene on the beach, contemplating Kata's body, he formulates his problem in terms of a problem of perception: he can touch her body now, but it will not be real to him until he remembers it in familiar surroundings back in Budapest. That man is created by his society, rather than vice-versa, is a constant in Szabo's films. In fact, those who abandon their own social milieu, Hungary, abandon along with their heritage their consciousness.

Although Szabo cannot be accused of making nationalistic elegies or political tracts, his love for Budapest and his fellow Hungarians lends a lyrical quality to his films that takes us unaware and sweeps us into his optimistic mirror of mankind. In *Father* and in *Lovefilm*, we know the main characters in all their strengths and weaknesses. In the course of the films, their subtlety and their individuality is cast against a background of people with alien sensibilities, who seem to persecute them. In *Father* the boy imagines himself the object of the others' ridicule and persecuted by an impending stepfather; in *Lovefilm* the children are mercilessly teased to the point of persecution. It is the obsession of the Andras Balint character in each film that leads him into this paranoid state, not unjustly. For in his search for his father or concern for Kata, he is careless and is unable to relate to other people honestly. He fibs about his father as a child and refuses to identify himself, when he interviews his father's former colleagues in *Father*. In *Lovefilm*, the traces of irresponsibility are more amusing: Jancsi carelessly puts down his parade banner as he pursues Kata and returns to find it gone; he stays with Kata in Frejus so long that he has time

only for a minute's glimpse of Paris from the train station to fulfill his dream of seeing Paris. Szabo's typical ending is another humorous way that he alleviates the asocial or anti-social elements of his characters: the camera pulls back to reveal a number of other people doing the same thing. The last shot of *Father* begins with a close-up on Tako's mysterious little smile, then pulls back to reveal him standing before his father's grave, then further back to reveal a cemetery full of people celebrating a Hungarian holiday at the graves of their fathers.

Family continuity—responsibility to the dead and the living—is the strongest social bond in Szabo's first film. In his next, that bond is weakened by exile, flight, arbitrary borders. Jancsi remains in his home, despite the temptation to follow Kata, and her letters confessing her fortunes and misfortunes abroad seem to justify his decision, as they gradually fade to the postcard level. In the final scene, Andras poises his pen above a card, seemingly isolated in his need to communicate with Kata, then the camera begins to pan along the counter in the post-office, where a ragged row of Hungarians also search for the right words to write to their loved ones too far away to keep love alive.

Father and *Lovefilm* compose a duet on the development of a young man, a sort of *Bildungsroman* on how the individual fits into the jigsaw puzzle of his society. The next two films are free of lead actors and are about constellations within the group. In *25 Fireman's Street,* the house is the star; in *Budapest Tales,* the trolley car. *25 Fireman's Street* tells the tale of a house being demolished, and as the house crumbles, a century of Hungarian history unfolds. Szabo sketched his original conception of this intricate film:

> One night, an entire household of people has the same dream, and in that night, they love each other, hate, betray, reconcile themselves. It is this common dream that unites them, although they have all always lived in the house. They are in the attic, the cellar; there are layers of people in this house and, on this one night, they come together for a universal dream, but the next morning, when they awaken, nobody can be sure that life is the same. Yet they all act as if everything is normal, and don't believe that all the others shared their dream.

Behind Szabo's statement, there seems to lie an additional need to air out socialism: first, to explore the social injustices that dogged Hungarian history, typified by the class struggle and the manipulation, if not oppression, of women; secondly, to explore the basis of the social contract; and thirdly, to portray history as a dream, or nightmare, come true.

This presence of occupying troops is felt throughout the film. The impression of invasion is established through small groups of soldiers repeatedly moving onto and then filling up the screen. The uniforms change, but the tactics remain the same, and we grow used to the visual pattern. In the way a lady speaks to her maid, in the way wealthy people hide their jewels, intending to use the rest for bargaining, we are led into the class consciousness of an era of materialism and social barriers. The political events seem to be side effects of a historical spiral in which psychological conflicts compel the political ones. Such a point of view is inevitable, if one examines the internal social effects of anti-Semitism during the Nazi era. But the change of uniforms signals a change of ideology, which remains unexplored. The soldiers are tools of political forces and are depersonalized in Szabo's film, so that they are merely catalysts in the psychological struggle of the people living at 25 Fireman's Street. According to the changing of the political guard, the banners above the door are changed. The continual alteration of colors at the entrance of the house is an ironic comment on the permutations within, recalling Marx's rejoinder to Hegel's observation that historical events will occur twice: "the first time as tragedy, the second time as farce." But the third and fourth time we see the banners exchanged, the banality of history repeating itself develops into a worn-out evil.

What interests Szabo is the human depth behind the bright colors on banners and flags. In *Lovefilm,* the black-and-white memories of youthful dashes for air-raid shelters stands in strong contrast to the bright color of Kata's reality in modern France. The girl's own facile and cute quality is a part of the stunning blue of her rooms. Szabo also talked about his use of color:

> Do you know how long a film-maker spends on details of that nature? Color, shadow, decor? So, of course I'm pleased when somebody does actually talk about the pictures and the colors. Before making *Fireman's Street,* I studied Rembrandt's colors,

and before *Budapst Tales*. Breughel's. We talked about these things for days in preparation for the film. I sometimes think that in *Lovefilm* I made a mistake. The blue of the girl's room was too bright. Perhaps some subtlety was lost.

"Rembrandt's colors" give a muted and mysterious tone to *Fireman's Street*, which eases the eccentricity of the camera movements. The only scenes that are given full daylight are the awakening of the last morning, and the shots of the wrecking machinery hammering on the house. Modernity is always seen in bright daylight, bleached to a dazzling incomprehension, in Szabo's films. Particularly since this film begins at bed-time with all the anxieties that precede sleep and the dream discourse of the film, the chestnut, olive, and cobalt tones seem dark enough to be emerging from the past or the id or wherever dreams come from.

The opening sequence resembles documentary footage of mammoth machinery reducing a three-story building to smithereens. A voice tells us, "Tonight these people may leave this house," as the camera then introduces the inhabitants at bedtime. Two of the women are rather well-developed characters, one the object of persecution who tries to shield herself from pain; the other, a protector and shield who takes the misery of the persecuted upon herself. The former is the wife of a doctor, and by virtue of the family's established position, supposes that they will not be affected. Szabo establishes the wealth of their tradition in an extraordinary synchronic sequence like the dance of the generations. A frilly chorus of young girls prancing in ballet costume begins a family celebration—old and young, alive and dead, the future and the past. While waltzing, one attempts to warn another of the future; she is told that he is long since dead. And they continue the waltz into a scene of destitution, as the family empties the room of furniture in preparation to flee. The doctor's wife is then thoroughly humiliated in a concentration cellar, released, reunited with her husband, only to have him die. As she cries out against the family's later arguments that it's only natural that women marry, that women need men, that she will die lonely and bitter, she backs up helplessly against a wall until her body is framed by the family portraits. Their ceremonial stance is a mute, gilt-framed indictment against a widow's refusal to remarry, to lose another loved one and to suffer again. The

FIREMAN'S STREET

camera circles around her, taking over the movement of the waltz and thus puts us in the point of view of the dancers. The power of the scene lies in our being forced to move around her and see her fear, while realizing it is our point of view that terrorizes her.

Her feelings of having suffered "enough" are counter-balanced by those of the all-suffering baker's wife, who hides people in her attic at the risk of her own life, while she maintains a bakery. During the war, she turns out loaves of bread almost as miraculously as Christ, only to have them confiscated and eventually to watch in shock as the bakery is socialized under a new regime. Only once does she object, as the camera shows her being squeezed by the people hiding above, around, and below her: "One more person and I'll never go to sleep." As her son prepares to leave, he complains about the ahistorical consciousness of these mere survivors at 25 Fireman's Street: "When it's all over, we will forget. We won't even dream about it." Szabo is convinced that events cannot be demolished. They do not yield to materialist solutions:

> Later, one realizes that the roots of certain phenomena are deeper, certain attitudes are influenced by the experiences of long-past events, or by a large number of experiences, or their essence, and then one starts to search for the deeper layers of the personalities. The secrets of the individuals, the internal structure of the visible buildings, the depths of old wounds under the scars—and then one tries to paint a more personal and psychologically, perhaps more detailed portrait. Later one realizes that analysis, the precise picture of things and the effect on the individual cannot always be found in realistic acts, but much deeper, one realizes that historic and political events of 30 or 40 years earlier and personal traumas have an impact, and even today penetrate the dreams. The dreams influence the daylight mood, and thus the daylight decisions and acts.[2]

The end of the war nightmare is a sequence at first sympathetic to the occupier, a young German soldier who stands on the staircase, longing to go home to his mother. A Hungarian mother views him compassionately, a shot is heard and a cry, "The Russians are close," and the boy falls dead. This entails a 360° shot which then follows the mother back through the door of an apartment into a new era, but still part of the dream. The new socialism demands a delicate balance of gratitude for favors done during the war and revenge after it. Szabo reunites the characters in their need for each other's signatures, verifying that they had opposed the fascist regime. The saintly innocence of the baker woman is questioned: "Were you a partisan?" "No, I just hid a few people . . . . " The close-ups and tight framing in this sequence imparts a feeling of pressure and anxiety balancing between individual responsibility and guilt. Szabo is careful here to avoid every ideology and categorization in favor of the humanist standpoint, but an ironic scene with the housekeeper betrays the absurdity of this period of realignment. Every European house has its concierge or keeper who manages, guards and gossips about the inhabitants. Szabo makes it clear that it was the house's keeper who betrayed the house: an obese, leering dragon of a woman, the very image of malevolence in his other films as well. When she approaches the baker woman to witness to her anti-fascistic stance, she explains, "All those years I could have reported all those people in your attic, but I didn't." The camera moves in to focus on the signature. Szabo's indictment of such behavior has no political axe to grind; the act of betrayal seems to be politically irrelevant, and this point is made again in *Budapest Tales*, where historical factors are missing. Betrayal breaks the social contract implicit in the sharing of the address, 25 Fireman's St., and creates the worst nightmares of history. Significantly, the longest nightmare sequence in this film is the Jewish pogrom: amidst the humiliation of the prisoners' nakedness, a guard offers a pitiful apology, "Excuse me, Madame." And, as in all Szabo's films, the offense is forgiven, or perhaps simply forgotten in the chaos of historical haste.

In a crowd scene preceding the persecution sequence, a group of people sing an anthem: "Sins of future, sins of late, they have paid for . . . " The price of such "sins"—I think Szabo would rather call it human folly—is the surrealization of the social contract, i.e., people's hatred and fear of one another when the "ties that bind" begin to strangle. Hungarian history after World War II is a sketchy dream in this film, with a quality approaching the films of Cocteau or Buñuel. Illogical sequences can only be understood in terms of the iconography and conflicts previously depicted. The film's color tones change: high-key lighting

and filler light banish the shadow, as a loss of privacy is also felt. The shadowy scene of entrusting precious possessions to trusty neighbors is repeated in a scene where the same persons are in reversed positions and in full daylight, implying that persecution procedes in an institutionalized form under another banner. But these impersonalized forms of persecution fit into Szabo's *mutatis mutandis* theme, and he shows more patience in trying to show how they fit into his aesthetic humanism than he shows for Hungarians in exile. In the previous films, they themselves bewail their alienation; in *Fireman's Street* we see the "American Uncle" returning with gifts for all, breaking the atmosphere with his orange shirt and tins of sardines. His apparition is edited into a sequence of a tenants' meeting for the house. This double invasion of privacy drives a woman into panic. Up against the wall, surrounded by family photos, she lashes out, "Do you in America know what's going on here? We don't want your gifts. Don't send me any more packages. Or sardines!" The sardines recall the scene in prison when she divided one tin of sardines up among two dozen women and children. Hunger is a problem of the past. The past is the problem of the present, and she screams that all she wants is peace. That is also impossible: the next cut reveals a wedding ceremony that she had protested. The celebration is an explicit and ironic denial of personal freedom. The complexity of the individual's fate with the family is once again portrayed by intricate camera work and a style of editing impossible to capture in words.

With similar technical virtuosity, Szabo veils the meaning of the final sequence. Amid decrepit furniture in the courtyard of the house, a fanatically idealistic Andras Balint is stripping other people of their possessions and selling them to a secondhand dealer who greedily amasses the loot until the old tenants stand half-naked. Ultimately, the young man sells an old medical bag, a gesture bound to shock any fan of Istvan Szabo, since the medical bag is an important piece of his iconography, a sanctified heirloom of the young boy in *Father* and a synechdochal aspect of the indispensable healer. The final shot of the dream can only be interpreted in terms of these two motifs: simultaneous consumption and rejection of materialism. There sits an archaic figure surrounded

FIREMAN'S STREET: *"Don't you know what's going on here?"*

by paltry antiques, hungrily gobbling down a glass pane from one of them.

The old house is wrecked and removed, but the historical dream is not so easily destroyed. The only form in which historical and political realism is minimal is folklore. So it was in this form that Szabo cast his next film. *Budapest Tales* has been discounted, because it is misunderstood. Penelope Houston reviewed it from Cannes as unsatisfactory: "There's a temptation to force more specific interpretations than the film wants to yield. . . . "[3] In an interview Szabo defended his lyrical and symbolical development:

> It is the merciless law of film-making that everything which is photographed is becoming realistic. Concrete, single reality makes generalization difficult, and leaves little space for the creative imagination of the audience. If you like: it is the hurdle and fence of all poetic polyphony. We have to overcome this basic contradiction which belongs to the nature of the film as a genre. . . . And when one tries to film the anguishing events, which are condensed in dreams, and occur again and again, and one feels that the message has not been expressed satisfactorily, lucidly, then one tries to de-robe it somehow, strip it from all detailed ornamentation, psychology and documentary proofs, and reveal life experiences. And if one is fond of these people, then one tries to find the justice of their presence in life, and to enfold it in such a manner that it should also mean the truth of the given period, nevertheless include it in the infinite process of human truth: namely, to authenticate their life.[4]

At a time when most abstractions in cinema are for structural purposes or laden with political overtones, it surprises us to be faced with a director's explicit claim to an abstract motivation and goal. The only signifying elements in the film are

the emotional and psychological conflicts, and at that level Szabo presents us with no absolute value system to judge the behavior that constitutes the "plot." This is not the age of allegory, and it is even more odd to find a director whose initial influence was the Nouvelle Vague turning to a medium formerly reserved for moralizing. But Szabo tries to refrain from moralizing. The advantages of this "Märchen" (the title in German) as a cinematic form are first, that the time reference is the future instead of the past, and secondly, the search for the meaning of community takes place in a vacuum without the complexities and ambiguities of a specific era. Consequently the human image and ethic is very idealized. The concerns of neorealism which film criticism has inherited are as falsely applied here as they would be in Greek tragedy.

Perhaps the right place to begin is with Istvan Szabo's iconography. It is evident in his work—especially in films as reduced as his short films are—that iconographic significance is attached to time-pieces, the doctor, and his bag, eyeglasses, and a tram or train car. None of these objects are peculiar to Szabo, but it is his ability to incorporate them so literally into the action that drives others on to the quest for significance.

The trolley car in *Budapest Tales* could be considered the star of a film whose plotless progression is a ritual of social reconstruction. The theme is also present in Miklos Jancsó's work: in the wake of social devastation, we witness the anarchy of psychologically and physically isolated individuals approaching one another tentatively. In their sense of loss and being lost, their emotions have the impact of being prototypes of human sorrow, joy, love, hate, loyalty and betrayal. Szabo proposes that fear is one of the most powerful binding agents of a group, for toward the end of the journey, after hanging together through thick and thin, it is still the recognition and confession of each man's fear that unites and overjoys them again.

When people emerge from hiding and find themselves in a state of nature, how do they build a social group? First of all, they find a vehicle for their baggage. Together they push the vehicle in the direction they are going. Simple enough to have the verity of a fable! All the reality is then invested in the experiences of the journey, which the tram-tracks must determine. "Tracks lead somewhere," says one of the nameless characters—an assumption that immediately provides a goal at once so unknown and unlikely that their pushing seems little more than Sisyphus-labor in the initial scenes. Thoughts of Sisyphus never entirely disappear, but the task is transformed to a group endeavor and lightened by the unity of the motley group pushing the battered tram, by magic, it would seem. Szabo's magic, as ever in his films, is the combination of mutual need and the journey, which functions as the test of affection and self-knowledge. In *Father,* Tako's idea to seek testimony of his father's existence is triggered by a half-remembered town he passes through on a train. In *Lovefilm,* the entire past is staggered between the interruptions of train officials on the journey from Budapest to Frejus. In *Fireman's Street,* the journey is going on beyond the screen, making the constant flight and exile reflect the instability of Hungarian life: they protect each other's possessions without the guarantee of return. This motif can be easily explained as a standard trick of fiction, but this does not discredit Szabo's dramatic technique. In fact, by a slight variation in this traditional theme, Szabo fixes all significance of the journey onto the trolley and portrays it in such detail that in one sequence, its indispensible value is proved, when the passengers first abandon it, then return to dismantle and transport each piece, then reassemble it across the river. Without the trolley, their trek becomes a wandering instead of a journey. As the cameras moves down the center of the tracks, the characters gradually fall away from the path and collapse, to the left and right of the screen, thus severing our attention.

Szabo is not, however, featuring a Chaucerian pilgrimage as a tour de force for the psychological development of the characters. It is clear that their concentration is focused on the progress of the journey. When asked if the characters don't betray a somewhat brutal dedication to getting on their way, Szabo replied: "Yes, they do leave people behind or ignore their absence, or forget. But that is how people are when they are engaged in such a project. They can't afford to look back, to wail or mourn. They save their energy for the natural disasters and try to keep on in spite of the human disasters. Is that inhumane? Aren't there

common efforts that transcend the personal?" The inner contradiction of the film could not be more precisely stated, but the film is more than a paradox, as the tram is more than a symbol. When scattered characters first seek refuge in the tram, they are just trying to get in out of the rain. An old man philosophizes, "Where is there security today?" "It's stopped," replies another, referring to the rain. Obviously, Beckett has had his influence on the dialogue, and Bergman on the images, but Szabo has carefully stamped all his images with a good-humored humanism that focuses on people's common needs instead of common enemies. The size of the group vacilates absurdly, according to the number or noise necessary for that particular objective.

It is this sort of absurdity that raises Szabo's last two films to a level of abstraction beyond anecdotal history. In fact, Hungarian history contributes no necessary or sufficient condition whatsoever for understanding *Budapest Tales.* European history is fraught with reconstruction attempts, and this film has reduced that attempt to its archetypal components: devastation, regrouping, fending off destructive acts of god and man, and the redemption of lost knowledge. When a civilization is devastated, so is its cultural knowledge and arts. As at the end of *Fahrenheit 451,* individuals embody products of human culture and their recital of this element of human knowledge is its only guarantee for survival. Szabo's camera work in such sequences also has an "instructive" effect, showing the pride of the individual in his knowledge and the reaction of the other members until they are shown united by this knowledge in a group shot. Such a scene occurs at the opening of *Budapest Tales,* when nobody knows what "depot" means. That's where the tracks lead, where all trams go, it's in the city, and it thus becomes their goal. Each individual contributes a bit of the definition in such scenes, or a single monologue provides information on how to rebuild the more complicated aspects of social life: how to care for a child on the occasion of twins being born in the tram; how to write a letter of request to a petty official; how and what to pack when running away from home. The last recital is a poetic reduction of a theme that motivated *Lovefilm* and *Fireman's Street,* this time focusing on the decision about what you need and

BUDAPEST TALES

can afford to carry. Memories may be too heavy.

Two of these recitals concern the tram itself: its color and number. Each individual suggests a number and its significance, so that our number system and its place in the history of ideas seem to be reestablished. The squabble is easily resolved by the number 1, nobody's favorite number, but a number whose wider application to their social unity and their sense of singularity in the world is immediately obvious. The sequence that determines the color yellow for the trolley also establishes the basis for the tragic love affair of the journey. Maya Komorowska plays a bespectacled beauty who falls in love with another intellectual, when they share an exchange of free-association over the color yellow.

Szabo's romanticism is once again evident in his poetic scenario of lovers' exchanges, but in *Budapest Tales,* private need affects social consequences and vice-versa. One man is driven from the group when he jams the brake, causing the tram to derail. The action remains unmotivated, but later he is taken captive and thrown inside the tram where the newborn twins are presented to him as his sons. His love affair was casually established within a larger group of lovers in an earlier sequence and here takes on explicit meaning as the "father" is repatriated. Another man is used as a scapegoat for having traded in "ripable" cloth. Following a dramatic accusatory scene of ripping shirts, he is driven away like an animal, and we learn later that for the sake of unity, the group had to release their anger on him. Szabo demonstrates all the paradoxes and social contradictions of group living, but his style neither questions the justice of such actions nor entertains an alternative. The individual sacrificed for social welfare finds its paradigm in the doctor. As in previous films, the doctor's need to help

others is not reciprocated. In fact, in *Budapest Tales* the brutality of his death—stretched and hung from a tree—belongs to the anarchy beyond the tram tracks in the forest, from which outlaws and brigands regularly emerge to threaten the group. The ritual nature of his death also functions as a sort of ritual investiture of prophecy in the character of Maya Komorowska. She runs into the wilderness to find him, when the man she had loved is crushed under the weight of the tram, as he attempts to hold a piece of missing track in place. The loss of this passionate love is compensated by her heightened sense of touch. The reflection on her cheek from a new coat of yellow paint on the tram tells her it is the wrong color—and not the true yellow which she had shared with her poet-lover. He was a man, they all admit, who knew all the colors.

There seems to be a rather utopian principle operating here, which dictates that individual sacrifice is not lost, but rather invested in the survival of the group. This is most clearly seen when the lover's sensitivity to light has been transferred to Komorowska's fifth sense, even though this event separates her from the others. After that, she appears in almost no group shot, and emerges only to correct the fore-knowledge offered by another character who purports to read palms.

By trying to resolve good and evil and explore the need of man for his fellow man, Szabo walks the tightrope intellectuality of the humanist.

> I wanted to make a film so simple that anybody could understand—even a child. So I told a fable so simple and clear about human beings whose only need was to stay alive and together. An optimistic or pessimistic portrait of man? I don't consider myself a happy-ending optimist, but I don't believe that man is all bad. Look at the beautiful things man has created. And the suffering too, of course. But it's about an even break.

The humanist trend has softened the films from the socialist countries and rendered them more passionate, if not political. A statement like Szabo's, above, reflects the need of socialist-realist taught film-makers to communicate a message that is not elitist in form in a work of art that is not a formulaic reflection of socialist-realism orthodoxy, but nevertheless reflects its aims.[5] Szabo's choice of a genre equivalent to fable appears simple; but the choice is simpler than the results, for it challenges a taste that has been oriented toward realism. All the necessary elements of legitimate socialist cinema are there—positive characters and struggle toward a common goal. Szabo's cinematic construction has been simplified since the flashbacks, atmospheric modulations with color, and camera maneuvers to correspond to historical complexity that he used in *Fireman's Street.* In *Budapest Tales* a constant flow of events comes to a carefully prepared conclusion.

If the central role of the trolley car disturbs us, we need to review the purpose of a fable. In ancient fables animals take the place of creatures whose essential traits are exaggerations of a certain human quality and whose psychological make-up we recognize as human. Their adventures are amusing by reason of paradox and convey a certain satirical comment on human nature and society. Szabo's characters have been chosen in the same way, and if they do not directly satirize social forms and the concept of progress, there is an ironic counterpoint to Szabo's imaginative tale of how Budapest got its yellow tram.

In the final sequence, the characters push the tram into the city at last. In the distance many trams emerge. As the visibility increases through fog, we see for other groups of refugees pushing trolleys. They are all yellow and numbered "1". This sudden realization of the universality of their predicament confuses the group we have been following. They disperse and disappear in the crowd, while we see their faces isolated and stymied by the crowded city. Thus Szabo pulls us back to reality, allowing the camera to wander as aimlessly as his characters. Such an end to the unified struggle suddenly questions its validity, and reminds us of one of the Beckettesque exchanges at the start of the journey. The poet sings a song to rouse them on their way: "We follow Heaven's will." "We're standing still," comments a character who realizes the tram is no longer moving.

Thus Szabo's characteristic ending doesn't have the reassuring quality it had in previous films, when the kaleidoscopic image allowed us to see many individuals suddenly united in the same activity. Other traits characteristic of Szabo films also have acquired an ambivalence in the abstract nature of this fable. The usual repetition of one

scene at different speeds from various angles as a motivating force is completely absent, except for the introductory sequence of newsreel clips of trolley cars in the hustle and bustle of city life. As introductory footage then, the newsreel clips establish a reality that is completely denied for the rest of the film first, by its fairy tale realism and, second, by the natural surroundings. The careful choice and mixture of color visible in previous films is limited to the yellow of the tram, whose color itself is given over to the characters as part of the film's action. When the tram is painted for a second time after surviving the fire, it emerges a putrid canary yellow. The action instructs us in the effect of color better than the director's own manipulation of our emotions through color.

Finally, Szabo's films have been essentially plotless. The action consists in psychological development of central characters toward a conscious or half-conscious goal, summed up in the oft-repeated line, "We live." His concern for psychological accuracy is not obsessed with metaphysical crises, as with Bergman. His characters are typical of modern Hungarians in the materialistic and social conflicts that have their source in the national political history which Szabo considers capricious, at best. Thus, the "objective forces at work in society"[6] shape not only the innermost being of these individuals, but more specifically their guilt, their inability to live out their passions, and their instinct toward persecution. Because society is unkind to its creatures, artists like Szabo are determined to be kind. Stripped from any social context, the characters in *Budapest Tales,* in their state of nature, differ very little from those of *Fireman's Street.* Good and evil are portrayed in a symbiotic relationship that stymies and neutralizes social progress. In each of his films, Szabo considered the concept of community, with its aim of living together from the individual, the historical, and the goal-oriented point of view. And in each film, it is forces beyond the characters that keep them together or apart. Szabo's major concern remains the poignant pleasure of survival. In *Fireman's Street,* an outsider asks one of the inhabitants, "How can you live here?" and he replies, "Hat in hand." Amid Szabo's technical virtuosity a humble plea for humanity seems superhuman.

FILMOGRAPHY (1961-1978)

1961 *Concert.* Diploma film.
1961 *Variations Upon a Theme.*
1963 *You.* Short feature. Cannes, 1963, Diploma; Tours, 1963, Grand Prix; San Francisco, 1963, "Best Short Fiction Subject."
1964 *The Age of Daydreaming.* Locarno, 1965, "Silver Sail."
1966 *Father.* Moscow, 1967, Main Prize.
1967 *Piety.* Documentary.
1970 *Lovefilm.* Venice, 1970.
1971 *Budapest, Why I Love It.* Series of short films; episode: DREAM ABOUT A HOUSE. Oberhausen, 1972, Main Prize.
1973 *25 Fireman's Street.* Locarno, 1974, Grand Prix, Prize of the Oecumenical Jury; Atlantia, 1974, "Best Film from Abroad."
1974 *Premiere.* TV play.
1976 *Budapest Tales.*
1976 *City Map.* Short Film.

NOTES

1. Quotations from Istvan Szabo were recorded by the author during interviews in Berlin.
2. Quoted from a brochure distributed by Hungarofilm, Budapest, 1054 Báthori.
3. *Sight and Sound,* Summer, 1977, Report from Cannes.
4. Again from the brochure on *Budapest Tales,* note 2 above.
5. For the best discussion of the changes in socialist countries films, see Steven Kovacs, "Beyond Socialist Realism" *Sight and Sound,* Autumn, 1976.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 245.

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Reviews

THE BUDDY HOLLY STORY

Director: Steve Rash. Screenplay: Robert Gittler. Photography: Stevan Larner. Columbia.

> *The truth about the beauty is given in the lines, and the beauty of the truth in the white spaces between them. If the white spaces are merely blank, the lines are just . . . just Hymns, Ancient and Modern (spoken by Bruno Rontini, in Aldous Huxley's* Time Must Have a Stop).

The truth of *The Buddy Holly Story* is not to be found in the tale it tells. The film is an unashamed attempt to re-create a legend, to reinvest the public in the myth of the mild-mannered young rock'n'roller who died only three years after he came on the scene to change entirely the course of popular music. In an Associated Press interview, producer Fred Bauer cites John Ford's *Liberty Valence* advice to "tell the legend, not the truth." Bauer adds, "We are doing the legend of Buddy Holly."[1] Elsewhere, he describes the film biography as the story of " . . . a good man in good times"[2]; however, one suspects that this rosey approach to history amounts to little more than a carefully calculated audience directive. In light of the current enchantment with fifties nostalgia in the media, it is the *legend* of Buddy Holly that is the basis for the film's box-office potential, and producer Bauer is simply putting his mouth where the money is. But this entrepreneurial attitude permeates what is in many other ways a fine film, and the result is a work in which the best intentions of artists consistently battle the worst intentions of producers. On the level of story, *Buddy Holly* provides us with yet another modern hymn to the hollow naiveté of the fifties, a nostalgic bit of (dangerously) nonanalytical fluff we could well do without. However, under Steve Rash's direction, and owing to an even greater extent to Gary Busey's sensitive and spontaneous portrayal of Holly, the film manages to squirm out of the mythic niche for which it was intended, achieving a certain of-the-moment screen beauty that is its only truth.

Roland Barthes defines myth as a mode of discourse.

> (S)ince myth is a type of speech, everything can be a myth provided it is conveyed by a discourse. Myth is not defined by the object of its message, but by the way it utters this message: there are formal limits to myth, there are no 'substantial' ones . . . A tree is a tree. Yes, of course. But a tree as expressed by Minou Brouet is no longer quite a tree, it is a tree which is decorated, adapted to a certain type of consumption, laden with . . . a type of social *usage* which is added to pure matter.[3]

Even if we adhere strictly to Barthes's definition, locating myth in a process of communication rather than in its subject matter, it would be difficult to conceive of a film biography that is not a mythologizing of its subject. Were it possible for the camera to record without the photographer, there is still no such thing as an innocent or objective audience: the individual about whom a film biography is made is already, to one degree or another, imprinted in the mind of the audience, not as a *person*, but as an image, charged with social, historical and emotional content.

The myth that surrounds Buddy Holly is conveyed to us in two ways. Almost from the start, he was a cultural "phenomenon," the clean-cut white kid who emerged from a small Texas town to take the music world by surprise with a sound that packed a decidedly black wallop. If he did not quite achieve in his lifetime the fame enjoyed by Elvis Presley and, later, by the Beatles, in death Holly was promoted to the status of legend. Moreover, the music which he created, unique in its blend of rock'n'roll and Tex-Mex country and western, became, with his death, infused with a layer of meaning having nothing to do with the sound, and everything to do with the legend. Is it possible to listen to Buddy Holly's music without "hearing" in it the sad story of his death? Without picturing ourselves in the fifties, perhaps as adolescents experiencing our first freedom (or so we felt) in rock'n'roll? Without hearing, in effect, not just good music, but "a good man in good times"? Barthes asserts that " . . . myth is a type of speech chosen by history . . . It is therefore by no means confined to oral speech . . . for any material can arbitrarily be endowed with meaning . . . It is because all materials of myth . . . presuppose a signifying consciousness that we can reason about

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them while discounting their substance."[4] The legend of Buddy Holly is told as much through his own music as it is in the liner notes of albums which continue to be re-issued some 20 years after his death.

There is thus no way that the story of Buddy Holly, the person, could be told. Still, if we allow for the possibility of degrees of mythologizing, it is clear that the makers of *Buddy Holly* were faced with a choice: to attempt to portray the facts in the life of a *man*, or to cash in on the myth of a shooting star. Naturally enough, they chose the path paved with gold. Producers Fred Bauer and Ed Cohen were previously associated with rock productions and television specials, as was director Rash. If they put their entrepreneurial expertise to good use in raising independently the $2 million for the production of their first film, it is perhaps this same expertise and familiarity with rock audience requirements that points the film's story in its legendary direction (Robert Gittler's screenplay is based on Bauer and Rash's adaptation of Alan Swyer's story). But Rash also brings to the film the simplicity of rock staging, a seemingly naive emphasis on the music and the man over any attempt at a sophisticated, "filmic" reality.

The story line of *Buddy Holly* is characterized by the rather disjointed, episodic treatment that mars many film biographies (e.g., Hal Ashby's *Bound for Glory*). The need to compress an unwieldy amount of biographically significant detail into a narrative format results in a series of "compilation" scenes which are not only unlikely in their juxtaposition of material, but which often lure the film away from fact toward a more workable fantasy. One such scene in *Buddy Holly* situates a confrontation between Holly and the Crickets in a Cadillac showroom. We learn (a) that Holly has been determined since he was a child to own a Cadillac by the age of 21, and (b) that "Buddy Holly and the Crickets" will soon be no more, as the two band members, disgruntled and homesick, are intent upon leaving New York for their hometown of Lubbock, Texas (which announcement takes Holly quite by surprise). The implication is that Holly's drive for success has always made him somewhat of a stranger to his roots, and has finally reached its pinnacle in the front seat of a Cadillac. But there is an unreal ring to the scene, a contrived feel, complicated by the fact that the entire scene is based on falsehoods which are reinforced throughout the film for the sake of narrative convenience. In reality, there were several "Crickets" over the years, usually forming a three-man back-up group; the film consolidates all the Crickets into two, "Ray Bob" and "Jessie." Further, Holly in fact did

THE BUDDY HOLLY STORY

quite a bit of recording in his native region, in Norman Petty's Clovis, New Mexico studios, and remained far closer to his roots than the movie implies. To be sure, some fiddling with the details on the part of the film-makers was unavoidable, and much of it is relatively insignificant (King Curtis, for instance, played back-up on a Holly recording, but the film has them playing together in concert; and there was no orchestra playing with Holly in his last concert at Clear Lake, although he was beginning to include orchestration on his recordings). But the upshot of this wholesale taking of liberties with the facts is that the film is ultimately unfaithful to the reality of Holly's life. Tending more toward summary than toward smooth narrative, it is at best comparable to the uninspired medley of hit tunes which Busey breezes through in the Clear Lake concert scene. Musicians-turned-legends are often encouraged to be less than creative in concert by audiences who cannot see the man for the myth: a quick run-through of million-sellers is usually far better received than a session of new works. Those who would tell the stories of these musicians are faced with a similar demand: "Tell the legend, not the truth."

Bauer's "good man in good times" statement is of a piece with the advertisements for *Buddy Holly*, which predict that "His story will have you singing, laughing, crying, cheering and stomping your feet," and with the film's dedication, " . . . to those who loved him first [his wife and parents]." We, then, must love him second. Indeed, it seems that we are expected not to learn something about the man, but to love him; not to gain perspective on the fifties, but to let the good times roll in our memory of the decade.

The relationship between Holly and Maria Elena, his Puerto Rican wife, is one of the more obvious vehicles through which we are encouraged to adore the man and, by extension, revere the myth. What begins as a witty and entertaining picture of a courtship dissolves gradually into a soapy image of young married love. The couple's final parting in a dreary rainstorm is set to violin music so incompatible with the rest of the sound track as to make us wonder if it is not coming from the theater next door. Of course, *we* know what the two lovers do not, namely that Holly will never return to see his as yet unborn child, and the film plays our knowledge of the legend for all it is worth.

What of the "good times"? The film dutifully records the racism that characterized the Nashville music industry in the fifties in such lines as "We don't *make* Nigra records here," epitomizing the overall rejection Holly's sound received in Nashville ("Drums is for par*ades*, boy!"). But the Crickets taunt the studio bigwigs by breaking into a gospel sound, and Holly punches out the man who calls him a nigger-lover. Our heroes are probably the only liberals Lubbock ever produced. In New York, it's all smiles with the benignly portrayed Sam Cooke and his entourage, and the owner of the all-black Apollo Theater runs through an amusing vaudeville routine when his "gonif Hopalong Cassidies" appear ("You don't mean to stand there and tell me you're *white!*"). The film effectively sidesteps our discomfort with fifties separatism by approaching it with a tsk-tsking, "leave it to Beaver" song and dance. One of the functions of myth is to simplify the world in order to make it less threatening. In filtering history through a Happy Daze, *Buddy Holly* renders palatable a social situation whose implications a seventies audience might otherwise refuse to stomach.

Buddy Holly was the first rock star to insist upon arranging and producing his own music, determined to protect his sound from the machinations of industry entrepreneurs. Director Rash displays a similar determination in countering the script's slick treatment of Holly's story with a visual and verbal interpretation that maintains an elegantly simple, homespun feel. The excellent quality of his photographic direction combines with the consistently fine acting of Busey to evoke a behind-the-scenes truth, a reality not of historical fact but of the intimate details of personality, and of the finely tuned nuances of physical movement. Busey relaxes into the role of Holly and saunters through the film like a pro, capturing both the outward awkwardness of the gawky Texas buck and the inner grace and gentle persistence of the confident artist. Rash's camera is a quiet one, supportive but unobtrusive, displaying the same trust in Busey that Norman Petty showed for Holly himself when he allowed the kid to show his stuff in his Clovis studios.

Busey's timing is flawless, and his pacing sets the tempo for the film's other actors. Interactions between Holly and his parents, girlfriend, band members and wife have an almost improvised feel to them; a playful spirit overrides even the film's more serious moments. (Maria Richwine's unflagging Giaconda smile leaves us wondering what the joke is: we are either witnessing Maria Elena appreciating Holly, or Maria Richwine appreciating Busey, but in either case, we are drawn into her subtly joyful spirit.) The sound track has all the easy-going spontaneity of those of Robert Altman, but, unlike Altman, Rash is not given to accentuating chaotic background noise. Nor are there many camera tricks cut in to detract from the immediacy of the actors' movements and speech.

The action is set against an unimposing backdrop of white, pastels and olive drab, and scenery is sparse and to-the-point. Two notable exceptions to this: The initial scene in the Lubbock roller rink is packed with colorful fifties memorabilia —bobby socks, chinos, and sticky cokes—highlighted by the attention of an overindulgent camera (a visual concession to the film's legendary aspects). And an obvious distinction is called forth between black and white in terms of setting: the backward tracking shot down the darkened stairway to the Apollo stage suggests a comic descent into hell by the white boys from Lubbock; the "restricted" (blacks only) hotel in which the Crickets register as Sam Cooke's valets is all dark wood, dark faces and behind-the-post camera positioning. But for the most part, offices are just offices, recording studios just studios, garages simply garages. It is a simplicity obviously intended, but not contrived. And, true to the between-the-lines feel of the film, much of the action takes place in the unadorned hallways of modern buildings, the camera just easing ahead to follow the movement.

Rash and Busey have interpreted the Buddy Holly story with an unpolished beauty that remains faithful both to the spirit of the man and to his music. If Holly's guitar style was remarkably sophisticated for his day (greatly advancing the state of the art of rock'n'roll), his music nevertheless retained a callow quality, a raw yet oddly delicate assertiveness. Busey incorporates these qualities into his rendition of Holly's character and of his music. On those Holly recordings to which Norman Petty did not later add overdubbing, we can almost "hear" the hollow space between the musicians and the studio walls. The film tunes in to this spatio-aural sense, re-creating it in the open-spaced simplicity of its visuals, and the casual grace of its speech.

The dialogue in *Buddy Holly* is often clever, and Busey is great with the one-liner. But the real verbal sense of the film is conveyed in its timing, which has all the immediacy and truth of an awkward pause: that space in time before words or convention rush in to fill the gap. There is a similar feel to Holly's music, a sense that its beauty lies somewhere "between the lines," in the interaction between the rhythm of his guitar and the rhythm of his vocal intonations; in the tension between the weak "dum di di dum dum" of the Crickets and the tremolo of Holly's own untrained voice, which was his truly unique instrument.

There is no telling what direction Holly's career would have taken had it not ended so abruptly. At the time of his death, his records were suffering a drop in popularity in the United States, a fact which the film makes clear. His attitude toward record companies and audience alike seems to have the confidently defiant tone of his lyrics: " . . . if we ever part, then *I* leave *you.*" Whether, with his death, fate allowed Buddy Holly to make his exit before his audience had a chance to tell *him* "Boola boola" is something we can never know. The last shot of the film, which freezes Busey in mid-gesture, clearly conveys this sense of a life unfinished, and a question unanswered. But this questioning, tentative tone has been captured in a more subtle way throughout the film: the split-second spontaneity emphasizes the delicacy of time itself, and makes a skillfully quiet statement of awe in the face of timely genius, and untimely death.

In other ways, however, the film treats time (and thus history) less as a complex movement than as a series of fixed, disconnected points. Holly's genius is no less remarkable if we acknowledge the influence on his work of musical trends which preceded him. But the film's screenplay is reluctant to do more than hint at the importance of such musicians as Chuck Berry, Bo Diddley and Fats Domino. The implication is rather that Holly's "jungle music" sprang from the mind of a lone genius in a small Texas town

somehow cut off from communication with the rest of the country; at best, that it developed *simultaneously* with the rock'n'roll movement elsewhere. The outrageous sounds which Holly belts out at the Lubbock roller rink strike the town's adults like a bolt from the blue, throwing them into a spasm of righteous holiness; sitting in his pick-up truck, the restless Holly cannot find a radio station that plays *his* kind of music; and a local disc jockey introduces him surreptitiously to the rock'n'roll records he is forbidden to play on the air, well after hearing Holly's own music. The romantic notion that the boy came from nowhere, disappearing as suddenly as he appeared, is reinforced by the film's attention to other now-dead stars (Sam Cooke, King Curtis, and Eddie Cochran, in addition to the Big Bopper and Richie Valens, who died in the crash with Holly). In focusing on these musicians and their tragic deaths, *Buddy Holly* redoubles its nostalgia value. Further, by pointedly ignoring other musicians who were influential on Holly's music, the film skirts an important but uncomfortable political issue: the struggle for recognition faced in the fifties by black artists (many of whom are still alive today). In this it reinforces the white world's traditional refusal to acknowledge the truly black roots of rock'n'roll.

The fifties in America are often viewed as a period of generalized unconsciousness, a marking of time between the forties war years and the social revolutions of the sixties. By merely fetishizing the culture of the era (and only certain aspects of its culture, at that), media become the irresponsible perpetuator of the comforting illusion that the fifties somehow stand outside of the historical continuum, presenting us with no challenging (and threatening) social and political issues to consider: "Hail, hail rock'n'roll! Deliver me from the days of old." *The Buddy Holly Story* does its part to advance the illusion in telling its tale of a "good man in good times." For the film to have shown the same commitment to the truth of its story line as it does to the truth it conveys so gracefully "in the white spaces between," it would be dependent for its financial success not on the myths of the man and the times, but on an audience determination to explode these myths, and . . . well, that'll be the day. —JUDITH BLOCH

NOTES

1. Peter J. Boyer, "Mining the Gold of a Rock Legend," *San Francisco Examiner*, November 30, 1977.
2. Vernon Scott, "*The Buddy Holly Story:* A Film About a True Rock Pioneer," *Oakland Tribune*, January 15, 1978.
3. Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, tr. by Annette Lavers (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972), p. 109.
4. Barthes, p. 110.

GIRLFRIENDS

Director: Claudia Weill. Script: Vicki Polon. Photography: Fred Murphy. Music: Michael Small. Editing: Susanne Petit. Warners.

Claudia Weill's *Girlfriends* is a marvellous film that presents the most likeable heroine I've seen in an American feature. Susan Weinblatt (brilliantly played by Melanie Mayron) is an intelligent, talented, warm, generous, humorous, courageous, vulnerable young woman who grows confident of her work and independence. We are not merely *told* that she's wonderful; we actually *see* tangible reasons that enable us to reach this conclusion for ourselves. She is not just a "creative person" with lots of potential, but a serious working photographer who develops her talents.

This is in marked contrast, even to a highly progressive film like Paul Mazursky's *An Unmarried Woman,* with which it is bound to be compared. When I interviewed Claudia Weill at Filmex, she said that Mazursky was helpful and supportive to her when she was making *Girlfriends* and stressed that the boxoffice success of his film "will help us all!" Both films focus on a heroine who gains confidence in living alone after being rejected by a roommate (a husband in *An Unmarried Woman;* her best girlfriend in Weill's film) and who resists pressures from an appealing lover to move in with him. Although Mazursky's consciousness has apparently been considerably raised since he made *Blume in Love,* his heroine's value is still defined primarily by men. Her extraordinary lover (Alan Bates) is the famous talented artist; she works in a gallery as a secretary. In fact, it is difficult to understand why so many men find her so appealing since she is basically so ordinary; we are merely *told* that she's wonderful by her lovers and particularly by Mazursky. I guess we are supposed to be convinced by her

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success with men—the unbelievably perfect Bates falls madly in love, the artist who specializes in one-night stands wants to see her again, and even her husband wants her back—and her willingness to sacrifice them, rather than by her own qualities.

But the story is different with Susan Weinblatt—an intense Jewish girl with a great sense of humor, who can look homely and dumpy one minute and beautiful and voluptuous the next, but whose intelligence, talent and spirit are never in question. When I interviewed Melanie Mayron, she told me that her variable appearance was partly controlled by the unusual shooting schedule. Shot in November and December of 1975, the first part of the film (up to the scene where Susan paints the red wall in her new apartment) was originally a short made for PBS that ended with Susan selling her first photographs and her best girlfriend Anne Munroe getting married. Then later in 1976 when Claudia Weill got more funds to expand the film to a feature, she decided to follow Susan's story of how she made it on her own. The changes in hairstyle and dress helped to cover the time gap, particularly since two scenes had to be inserted into the earlier section. Yet, as it appears in the finished version, Susan's physical changeability works effectively as a visible gauge to how she feels about herself at any moment, which is what gives her the power to attract others, including the audience.

In a marvellous scene following a wedding, where a slightly drunk Susan talks with the officiating rabbi (wonderfully played by Eli Wallach), we understand why this married, middle-aged pillar of the community is suddenly terribly attracted to this vital young woman. Without reciting familiar feminist rhetoric, she tells him how she wanted to be a rabbi when she was seven and how her grandfather wouldn't allow her to be present when he talked to God, so she decided to go talk to Him Herself! The story is well told with humor and perspective rather than bitterness or self-pity; it's clear that this girl's no loser or victim. Thus, when he tells her she would have made a great rabbi, we actually believe him. Susan engages him directly as a human being, making it impossible for him to retreat behind the rabbi persona. When he confesses that he really wanted

Susan (Melanie Mayron) and Anne (Anita Skinner): GIRLFRIENDS

to be an actor and demonstrates a mime routine by lighting an invisible cigarette, she immediately enters the game and transforms the butt into a joint.

Susan demonstrates the same kind of imaginative playfulness and transformational power in her first encounter with Eric, a young teacher she meets at a party the same night of Anne's wedding. (Undoubtedly the inclusion of both wedding scenes would have greatly enriched the film, but they were omitted for economic reasons.) Although with Eric *control* is the name of the game (who's telling the joke, who's asking whom to dance, and who decides when they go home to bed), the wit and flexibility they both exhibit take the edge off the issue and prevent this potential one-night stand from becoming dehumanized. We are not surprised when a real relationship develops with Eric or that the main issue is still control. He wants her to move in with him and she wants to keep her own place because, as she confesses to Anne who abandoned her at the opening of the film, she fears he will leave her. But she also wants to hold on to the independence that she has gained and that Anne is also struggling to achieve. Susan is lonely and wants a man, but she has learned she can take care of herself. The intelligence of Weill's direction, Vicki Polon's script, and Mayron's performance make this position convincing.

At the end of the film, the image freezes on a close-up of Susan's face, as she sits alone in a room of Anne's cottage where she has gone after the opening of her own photographic show to find out why her friend did not attend. What she

learns is that Anne has had an abortion without telling her husband. For the first time since Anne's marriage, the two women really talk and discover the realistic limitations in the life-choice that the other has made. Then Martin arrives, and he and Anne go to the next room, once again leaving Susan alone. I asked Melanie Mayron what Susan is expressing in that ambiguous look captured by the final freeze. "For the first time Susan is confident that she and Anne can continue to be friends. She is more secure because Anne has confided in her about the abortion . . . it's something they can share. Their friendship has matured. By this point Susan can take Martin's interruption. She doesn't take it as a rejection as she did at the beginning. Anne has probably helped her move toward taking more of a risk in her relationship with Eric."

When Melanie Mayron saw the film for the first time with an audience of four, she was uncertain about her performance—whether it was good or funny. Since this was her first starring role, she was used to character parts where she had little screen time and "had to get it all in there." But in *Girlfriends* the story followed her and for the first time she was playing a part that was close to herself, so it felt as if she "didn't have to do anything."

"I totally trusted Claudia because everything was shot so out of sequence. She kept the throughline for me." After seeing it for the second time with a regular audience, she was surprised by how well it worked. "I didn't know there were all those laughs . . . or that my low-key humor would come through." Now, most of her friends tell her it's the first "women's picture" where they can really identify with the heroine; she feels the same way and so will many other women in the audience.

Susan Weinblatt is not the film's only asset. It presents an array of women who are struggling with liberation and who are in different situations: Anne Munroe (Anita Skinner), a would-be poet who is unsure of her talent and who chooses marriage and motherhood where she finds a new set of problems; Julie (Gina Rojak), an ambitious professional photographer who has successfully adapted to divorce; Beatrice (Viveca Lindfors), a successful gallery owner with a young lover (played by Viveca Lindfors's son); and Ceil (Amy Wright), a young hippie-like dancer who good-naturedly sponges off men and women alike and who is too irresponsible either for a career or motherhood. None of the women are really beautiful in the conventional sense of glamor—except maybe for Viveca Lindfors, whose age takes the edge off her beauty. Yet all are attractive in quite different ways, particularly once we get to know them as individuals. It is also very refreshing that none of these women is worried about being used as a sex object or is pressured to use her body to get ahead. Instead, there is a tacit assumption that all of them have a hearty sexual appetite and actively pursue their own desires.

Beatrice and Julie are developed too briefly, so at times they almost verge on caricature. In the gallery, Julie dictates to Beatrice exactly where and how her pictures are to be hung, while the latter's young lover runs interference between these two powerful women. In contrast to the modest, agreeable Susan, who leaves these decisions up to Beatrice, Julie seems rather difficult and self-centered. Weill thinks that Julie is just being clear and professional, a stage Susan is moving toward but has not yet reached. Beatrice and her lover are wearing matching neckbraces, implying they spend time together outside the gallery, but also that they have matching tastes. One might see them as a sexual reversal of the conventional couple pictured in the poster hanging on Susan's wall, where the caption reveals the young woman's dependence on her mate: "I like what you like!"

Ceil is developed much more fully and successfully. As the sixties brand of sexual freedom, she is contrasted with Susan's more responsible version of liberation. When Susan is lonesome, she picks Ceil up as a hitchhiker and generously lets her stay in her apartment without paying. But as Ceil begins to violate her territory—moving her things, turning her photographic trays into a wash basin, wearing her clothes, and making a sexual pass, Susan finally tells her to leave because she wants to be alone. Weill says Ceil's main function in the script is to show how Susan relates to that kind of person—"one who is seemingly independent but actually dependent and demanding." When I asked Weill whether making Ceil bisexual implied a negative attitude toward lesbianism, she said, "No, when Ceil makes the pass, she's a lovely girl, not a pain in the ass. It gives Susan a

Left: Melanie Mayron and Christopher Guest; right: director Claudia Weill.

moment to reconsider her relationship with Anne. When Susan is so upset with Anne's marriage, one can wonder whether she's in love with her. The scene with Ceil gives Susan the opportunity to see if it is so. The film is about the whole range of experiences a young woman can go through. A love relationship with another woman is one of those real possibilities, but one that Susan doesn't choose. Friendship and love are levels of intensity on a spectrum."

Anne Munroe is the other woman referred to in the title, but Anita Skinner's performance prevents her from offering an equal counterbalance to Susan. Despite the quality of Anna Moore's poem that is used in the film, I felt that Anne would never really make it as a poet. She's too conventional and ordinary. Yet, Claudia Weill insists: "Neither woman is centered at the beginning. I feel quite strongly that Anne could make it, that her marriage could make it, that she's a pretty tough cookie!"

Perhaps this discrepancy is partly explained by the unique genesis of the film. The original short focused equally on the two women; it was only in the later version that the attention shifted primarily to Susan. But I think that Susan's dominance in the film is already clearly established in the opening. In the first sequence we see Anne asleep in the morning light as we hear a strange clicking that awakens her and is revealed to be the sound of Susan's camera. Anne is immediately introduced as the passive object while Susan actively controls the point of view. This photograph turns out to be one of the first works that Susan sells and is actually the favorite of the magazine editor, who appreciates the light more than the model. Yet he "crops" the photograph and Susan's artistic control, just as Anne's relationship with Susan and her own artistic aspirations get cropped when she marries Martin. Incidentally, during the interim between the two shoots, the real lives of the two actresses followed the script—Anita Skinner got married and Melanie Mayron sold her first photograph (as a cover for David Blue's "Cupid's Arrow" album).

Motherhood has even greater impact on Anne's poetic aspirations. Although she loves her adorable daughter, she gradually faces the fact that having a child prevents her from doing much work. When she decides to abort her second pregnancy, she does not tell her husband so that she cannot be talked out of it. Like Anne, the film never confronts the husband directly so that the courageousness of her decision is somewhat undermined. *Girlfriends* implies that both choices—marriage and an independent career—take courage and responsibility and that both carry with them a set of inherent limitations; but Susan's choice, at least as developed in this particular film, turns out to be much more appealing.

The men in the film unfortunately tend to be more conventional. Martin (Bob Balaban) and Eric (Christopher Guest) at moments almost become objects of satire, yet they remain basically likeable because their feelings are authentic. The same balance is struck in the wonderful cameo with the gallery owner Carpel (Roderick Cook), who recommends Susan to Beatrice. On the one hand, he is the arch, New York artsy homosexual, affected and inflated with self-importance, yet his humanity still comes through the mask. Aware that Susan has lied, he helps her anyway because, in fact, he has a good eye for talent. When she gushes with gratitude, "I really appreciate this," he tartly retorts, "I *know* it!"

The most successful male character is Rabbi Gold, who provides a wonderful variation on the stereotyped middle-aged married man. Not only does he represent a positive father figure, who gets Susan started in her career by hiring her to photograph Bar Mitzvahs and weddings and who reaffirms her sexual attractiveness when she needs it, but he also represents her Jewish heritage, which may be sexist but which also is the source of many of her values—her humor, self-irony, emotional expressiveness, acceptance of contradictions, and integration of love and humanity in all aspects of experience.

Susan is not really threatened by men. The only visible threat is offered by a loony cab driver who takes her home when she flees from Eric after they make love for the first time. The cabbie tells her that if a man gets mumps when he is an adult, he becomes impotent. Apparently using this remark as a sexual come-on, he significantly confuses sterility with impotence. Later, when Susan becomes involved with Eric, she makes him call his mother to make sure he had mumps as a child, revealing that she is beginning to think about having a baby. Obviously, Susan's main fear is not being sexually exploited but rather disappointed or rejected by a man who is sterile (or impotent) physically or emotionally. While we see her being stood up by both Rabbi Gold and by Eric for a ballgame, we know that these rejections are situational and suspect that both men are capable of emotional depth. Of course, neither one of them is as perfect as the Alan Bates character in *An Unmarried Woman,* but they are both a lot more believable.

This is not the first film directed by 31-year-old New Yorker Claudia Weill (who incidentally is a cousin of the noted Kurt Weill). When she went to Radcliffe, she was interested in painting; but since they had no painting courses, she switched to photography. One summer she worked on the United Artists feature documentary *Revolution,* which launched her in film-making. She has produced and directed a number of documentaries, including *Joyce at 34* (1972), which deals with some of the issues raised in *Girlfriends.* She also directed a number of animated films for *Sesame Street,* freelanced as a camerawoman, directed some theater, and spent a year studying acting. Her documentary feature *The Other Half of the Sky—A China Memoir,* which covered the first women's delegation to China with Shirley MacLaine, was nominated for an Oscar.

Girlfriends marks her debut with dramatic fiction. At the press conference following the Filmex press screening, she said that she wanted to prove she could tell a story. She proves it beyond a shadow of a doubt—for the depth of characterization, the economy of the narrative development, the richness of the backstories, the concreteness of the choices all reveal her directorial talent. The characters and situations are so firmly rooted in specific details that the story feels like autobiography, a connection reinforced by the strong physical resemblance between Claudia Weill and Melanie Mayron that you can see in the accompanying photographs. (Ironically, Mayron's appearance now is radically different so the director, whose hair was short and straight when they were shooting, now looks more like the heroine than the actress does.) Weill claims that the film "is autobiographical only in the sense that I know the material—the milieu, not the events. I feel that I've been Susan. I've been Anne. But it's not my story, or the writer's story." The story was originally Weill's idea, but she hired Vicki Polon to do the actual writing. The film was financed primarily by grants and loans; the final budget was half a million dollars. Weill is very grateful to her crew, many of whom worked for deferred salaries, such as Michael Small who wrote the music, cameraman Fred Murphy, and editor Suzanne Pettit. She was particularly heartened by the cooperation and support of Eli Wallach and Viveca Lindfors, whom she merely called up and who agreed to do their parts before they had even read the script.

The film will probably be a commercial success, which will help us all! The *Filmex* screening sold out two hours after the box office opened and an additional screening was scheduled. Once Warner Brothers bought the film, all deferments were paid. Warners will release it this fall and have wisely signed Weill for a two-picture development deal. She is now reading scripts, looking for her next project to direct. Like her heroine Susan Weinblatt, *Girlfriends* establishes her as an intelligent, talented, admirable young woman who is confident of her work and independence.

—MARSHA KINDER

THE LACEMAKER

(La Dentelliere) Director: Claude Goretta. Script: Goretta and Pascal Laine from the novel by Laine. Photography: Jean Boffety. Music: Pierre Jansen.

In *The Lacemaker* Claude Goretta looks perceptively at the life of a young working girl and her experience of bafflement as she becomes an adult and encounters a world in which she has little value and no place. The film shows a year or so in Beatrice's late adolescence during which she leaves the shelter of home and childhood, has an affair which ends in rejection, and finally suffers a collapse; at the end she is in an institution, where she sits alone, knitting, the "lacemaker" of the title. The film examines the process by which growing-up leads not to a hero's gaining adult identity and taking his place in the world, but to the heroine's denial.

Goretta is in close sympathy with Beatrice as he traces her defeat. The seasons turn from spring to autumn, from clear sunshine to drizzle, while the setting moves from a bright open Normandy seaside resort to the grey traffic-clogged streets of Paris, and finally to a bleak walled hospital garden, full of dead leaves, the changes in setting reflecting the heroine's change from innocence to experience. The audience is brought close to Beatrice's outlook on things: when she leaves home she looks through her childhood scrapbook, and its familiar pages appear on the screen; when she washes the supper dishes we see the dishpan and crockery and her hands scrubbing a plate, rinsing it, and stacking it to drain; when she leaves for work in the early mornings she is careful not to wake her sleeping student lover, and a scene is given over to her quiet movements around the room, watching him to see if he stirs, easing open the door and closing it silently behind her; when the love affair is ending, the camera moves quietly over the walls of the room she painted when they moved in, and the scarves and sketches with which she decorated it.

Beatrice is herself quiet and diffident, not given to objectifying her feelings or values in words—a quality that is respected by Goretta—so it is both necessary and appropriate that we share Beatrice's perspective much of the time; in this way, rather than understanding her analytically, we come to feel with her, in keeping with her own approach to things, by experiencing her world directly.

At the same time the film analyses her situation, and the process of her exclusion, with sharp understanding. The action is organized into two distinct parts, unified by parallel scenes and themes: Beatrice's friendship with Marilyn and her affair with François. Both end in her being abandoned. Marilyn, and more important, François, fail to recognize Beatrice and her worth because they are able only to perceive those portions of reality that come to them translated into their very different, but equally exclusive, codes. Beatrice's qualities—her loyalty, unselfishness, love, seriousness—seem almost invisible to those around her who look to match reality with the forms of values reified by the culture, from which hers are excluded. Marilyn's perception operates only in response to the latest fashionable images in lives or situations; François, a middle class Sorbonne student, responds not to images but words, finally valuing only what comes to him filtered through language. Ironically, although the others appear "unconventional"—Marilyn with her sensuality and wild disco-dancing, François with his sensibility and 2CV, it is really Beatrice who is the outsider, as her situation at the end confirms, for she exists apart from the codes of images and words, and their implicit rating system, to which the others conform.

The film begins in a beauty shop, taking a long look at rows of women being made over to match the latest image. Marilyn is a beautician, while Beatrice is the maid-of-all work, the hair-washer and floor-sweeper; the two are contrasted throughout the first part of the film, with the older woman summing up Beatrice's future alternative. While Beatrice's face is often without any particular expression as she works or thinks, Marilyn's is involved in a continual display of seductive mobility, accompanied by appealing gestures and postures; even in front of Beatrice she poses, with unlikely elegance, naked on the edge of the bath, or fluffs out her hair wide-eyed in the mirror, surrounded by her own photographs, her images. When Beatrice's face appears beside Marilyn's in the glass, in graphic contrast, she is looking with interest at the other's photos, not at her own reflec-

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tion. All Marilyn's activity is directed, with desperate intensity, to the attraction of men—looking for them to recognize in her the latest desirable image of "woman" that she strives to achieve as her identity.

Marilyn is seen as a product of mass commercial culture—without resources, needing constant stimulation, and yearning after images that hold out a promise of gratification with the endless dissatisfaction of an ideal consumer. On holiday in Normandy with Beatrice she slumps with boredom, stimulated only by visual set-pieces—young men in white tennis gear against green hedges or sailing a yacht through white surf: Marilyn sees in terms of the conventions of TV commercials. Critical of the alternative she represents, the film nonetheless sees the woman herself with sympathy, as a victim, turned into a consumable object, used by a variety of men, and growing increasingly bitter and hopeless: a huge poster of Marilyn Monroe hangs on her wall, a comment on her identity, made up out of scraps of cultural images.

Marilyn dominates the screen in her early scenes with Beatrice (to the point where it seems to be her film) because she conforms, almost to the point of parody, to the conventions of the cinema, giving out the signals by which the audience recognizes the heroine. In deliberate comparison, Beatrice often looks rather gauche since her lack of style violates screen conventions. In one scene they both leave the water after a swim, in view of a group of men: Marilyn, one hand poised on her head, sways her hips artfully and arches her back as she leaps playfully from the water; Beatrice, looking rather embarrassed, walks stolidy out of the ocean and up the beach to her towel. One evening they go to a disco where Marilyn gyrates while her face passes through a series of rock-star contortions, the formalized signs of emotional abandon. Beatrice sits on her own, looking doubtfully on the scene.

Beatrice only gradually emerges from Marilyn's shadow in the film, a deliberate device of the construction, for the shift of our attention from one character to the other works to call into question the values which underlie our automatic visual response, our assumption that Marilyn rather than Beatrice is the heroine, the person worthy of our attention. The poster of Monroe reminds us (as in Godard's film) that our vision has been trained at the movies: Marilyn is immediately both seen and known by the audience because her identity has been coded into the familiar language and values of the mass media. Goretta is attempting to reorder our perception.

Beatrice, in clear contrast to Marilyn, is unformed into any cultural image. She lacks the stock of expressions, gestures and words that are the common currency and medium of exchange in society. Goretta focuses on her face in a number of close-ups—as she sits pensively on the beach, or eats an ice, or walks to work—and captures its opaque quality: her expression is private, unlike Marilyn's succession of flashing signs, and we have to understand the gradual development of her thoughts and feelings from the context, or from her subsequent actions, as they are not advertised for others by a public performing self. Beatrice, diffident and inarticulate, comes from an older world of values. The film respects her opacity, and for once we see a woman on the screen who is not engaged in presenting a series of conventional signs (eyes round for surprise or appeal, mouth pulled back to expose the molars for joy or greeting, head tilted for intelligence) which, going on even when the character is alone in a room, reinforce the depressing assumption that a woman exists only in relation to others, having less a character than a series of roles.

In the epigraph, which serves as a closing comment on the film, Beatrice is likened to the anonymous working women—seamstresses, water-girls, lacemakers—who occasionally were to be seen in old genre paintings: rarely present in art, except as background figures, women like Beatrice are passed by unnoticed in life, their reality unfathomed by others. The epigraph suggests that art functions to make things visible, even as the film is doing in placing a "lacemaker" as its heroine in the centre of the frame. Only one character in the film sees Beatrice and knows her worth, and that is the artist who briefly observes her in a public garden and draws a sketch of her face—a figure, perhaps, for the film-maker himself, and his own portrait of Beatrice.

To everyone else Beatrice remains unknown. There is deliberate irony in the way the love-affair with François begins, with a dramatic moment of recognition: after a brief encounter in a cafe, François searches the sunny, flower-filled streets

of the resort until he eventually finds Beatrice walking by the ocean. The irony of the scene, with its idyllic setting, is painfully evident in retrospect, for it is precisely François's inability to recognize Beatrice, in anything more than the literal sense, that brings him to reject her. The epigraph comments on this rejection as a failure of moral recognition on his part:

> He will have passed her by without really noticing her . . . She is one of those who leave no clues, one of those who are difficult to fathom, who require close questioning to come at their meaning.

Where Marilyn's world of illusion depends on images, that of François is spun by words. Typically, when he first meets Beatrice she is almost silent while he recreates the resort in satiric travelogue terms, reducing it to a cliché. Beatrice, the working girl on holiday, enjoying the chance to sit in the sun surrounded by ocean and flowers, remarks mildly that she finds it pretty. Beatrice, who like her mother works with her hands, comes from a world where sympathy is felt rather than stated, and words are far less significant than actions. But François, the "brilliant student of letters," as he half-jokingly calls himself, comes from the world in which words are primary, and reality approached through the code of language.

When they start living together Beatrice paints their room, carefully marking the pages in François's books before covering them, while he is at a lecture. Her actions, and in particular, her hands in action, are frequently juxtaposed in contrast to his world and his words. One scene presents the opposition in almost abstract terms: she is ironing while he discusses with a fellow-student the meaning of the word "phoneme"—"a speech sound considered in respect of its functional relations in a linguistic system" *(OED)*. In another scene she peels a peach for him to eat while he explains how the feel of the skin makes him shudder, recoiling at the thought of contact. He comes closest to perceiving her when he helps her fold some laundered sheets, and takes her hand, recognizing her grace in the work. But more often he is unaware of the meaning of her actions. When he breaks off with her his speech, telling her she is being released for her own good from a situation in which she is evidently bored, is intercut with devastating effect by shots of her quiet hands, going on preparing dinner, silently giving the lie to his words.

THE LACEMAKER

One scene in particular stands as an early emblem of their relationship. While they are walking along a cliff-top François has her play a game—she is to shut her eyes and follow his directions. She walks blind and groping, now one way, now another, just as he orders, until she is on the brink of the cliff where he has her open her eyes and saves her from falling. Throughout the film, shots of Beatrice walking are used to indicate her movement through the growing-up process: now her way in life has come dangerously under his control, and at the end, unlike in the game, he will not be there to stop her from falling. But the form of the game is also significant here. Under the direction of his words, which are his way of controlling the world, she is made blind and helpless, cut off from her way of coping with reality, through the evidence of her senses and her practical experience.

On the evening before they sleep together for the first time, François fulfills the obligations of his code by presenting the matter verbally to Beatrice: he explains that she should only sleep with him if that is what she really wants, and that it is now up to her to choose whether or not they are to become lovers. Beatrice is silent, as usual, while he does the talking, and while he speaks she watches him, troubled. Then she shivers in the evening air, and François, emerging from his monologue, notices, and goes to fetch her shawl. Beatrice smiles. It is his action which she understands, not his words. The words created an unreal construct, interposed between her and the situation, by which it was to be understood that she could, on the basis of no experience, arrive at an intellectual resolution to the issue, and that, tacitly, the responsibility for the decision, and for whatever might follow, was hers alone once

she spoke. On the other hand, however, the action of fetching the shawl is real, visible and tangible (qualities emphasized by the film, as, together with Beatrice we watch François leave his seat, go to the car below, bring back the shawl, place it around her shoulders) arising in the first place out of at least a momentary observation of her—he saw her shiver—and indicating, however minimally, some recognition on his part of her existence and her needs.

For François, however, things only become real when they are translated into the code of language. Thus when they visit his home, with François anxious about the impression Beatrice will make on his middle-class parents, the moment of greatest tension occurs during dinner, as Beatrice starts to say what she does for a living. To prevent what he evidently anticipates will be a damning verbal definition, François interrupts her sentence, abruptly cutting off the fatal words. The words that would describe her have greater reality and power, for François, and no doubt for his parents, than the person herself. Beatrice, furiously silent, stuffs her mouth with fish and fishbones and chokes, which translates clearly into action—her sort of language—the real meaning of what François has just done.

For its part the film affirms Beatrice's approach to reality, using actions to make clear what words have made murky. Their respective positions in the failing affair are made visually explicit: in a brief shot of them out together in the world, François successfully crosses a busy Paris street, looking back in irritation at Beatrice left stranded on a traffic island; in one scene in the apartment (which consciously uses an offensive film convention and shows its meaning) she is naked while he is fully clothed, and turns away from her; when they part she is dumped back at her mother's flat, while he continues his life, driving off in his 2CV. Meanwhile, however, he has verbally defined their separation to be the best for both of them, effectively preventing her from saying anything to change the definition—"you could of course say that I've made a fool of you, but you would be wrong." Only when a woman friend accuses him of having treated Beatrice "like an employer, using her and then firing her" does he lose control, because her words threatened to upset the careful verbal construct he has erected in place of reality.

From now on Beatrice is almost always shown as a solitary figure. Walking the streets alone she faints on a crossing, while the traffic continues to roar by on either side: she is pregnant, and so even more at odds with the ongoing world around her. She fits in neither with Marilyn's mainstream commercial culture (Marilyn tells her she is getting fat), nor with its alternative, the intellectual world of François; knowing this, she turns to neither of them for support. There is now a gap of some months in the narrative, during which she loses the child.

The final scene draws together the film's analysis. Beatrice is now in an institution: her exclusion has become literal and complete. The audience is now placed as part of the society from which she is apart, merely coming to pay her a visit with François. Beatrice appears, walking down the corridor, and her appearance is a shock: she looks almost ugly, her face drawn and plain, her hair severe, her bearing ungainly. She is wearing a dowdy grey dress and answers François's questions with mechanically pleasant monosyllables.

The final scene refuses to make Beatrice the object of our condescending pity. On the contrary: she now knows the meaning of what has happened to her and at the very end she turns, discomfortingly, to subject the audience to her critical scrutiny, reversing the relationship of knowing viewer and known object, while throughout the scene her understanding is contrasted with François's lack of perception. Thus when she mentions the cliff game and his act of fetching her shawl, glancing at him to see if he now understands, he merely smiles as at pleasant memories, clearly missing the significance of the incidents, and their silent message. François, darting jealous and perplexed looks at her, wants for his part to know if she had other affairs, if she has travelled. She assents, pleasantly. He leaves, upset, but returning to life. She walks away in the opposite direction, down the corridor to resume her knitting. Large on the wall in front of her chair is a glossy blue-and-white poster of Mykonos, the extent of her foreign travel: the image replaced reality. Her words to François were false—she had neither new lovers nor travel, but an abortion and the hospital—but they were more congruent with

others' expectations, and the values of the outside world, than the truth: she followed the rules of the game, which she now understands.

She sits knitting, staring into space. When the film began she was a child, and now she looks almost like an old woman, brooding on the abuse of her life. Then she turns and regards the audience with a chilling look of knowledge and anger.

Both in *The Lacemaker* and in his earlier film *The Invitation*, Goretta stands at a critical distance from current assumptions, turning away to discover in the restraint and integrity of his common-place characters signs of a saving remnant. Their attempts to create small areas of order and to maintain lives with some degree of dignity are at odds with a much stronger culture of indifference and contempt. In both films his positive characters and their values are unfashionable according to most standards: a timid clerk, one of many in a modern steel-and-concrete office, brings out on his desk during the lunch-hour an old book on naturalism, and pores over its prints of plants with delight; an elderly unmarried typist on a rare day out raises her arms in sudden pleasure in the sunlight; a grocer's assistant, Beatrice's mother, pours extra thick cream in her daughter's coffee as a small attempt at comfort; Beatrice, among endless rows of identical graves in a war cemetery, quietly places a sea-shell she had been saving on one of the unknown headstones, a gesture of recognition and affinity.

The films recognize both the heroism of such gestures and lives, and the overwhelming odds against them. One scene, in *The Invitation*, might be a metaphor for Goretta's vision. The middle-aged clerk and amateur naturalist enjoys his flowers in the evening, examining them through a magnifying lens with quiet care; but when the camera pulls back we see from the wider perspective that his house and garden are surrounded at a close distance by intercrossing freeways where the traffic roars, and by serried blocks of concrete apartments. There is something at once movingly heroic and absurd about the man, blithely ignoring the forces that deny him value. In *The Lacemaker* the rows of uniform blocks are graves in the war cemetery, with only Beatrice's sea-shell to counter their endless anonymity.

No one notices Beatrice's action in the graveyard, except the audience; and since it is left unemphasized, we too could pass it by. Goretta's direction is unobtrusive and demanding. Where more conventional films tend to manipulate the audience by sensationalism, or by triggering automatic reactions to fixed codes, and where more experimental films launch rhetorical assaults on the viewer to change his mind, here the viewer's independent moral judgment is called for—if he is to follow the meaning of the film he has to notice small things. Time for this is allowed by the relatively slow pacing, which in itself contains a criticism of the opposing norms of violent speed and stimulation. Conscious of the way the conventions of art interpenetrate with reality. Goretta's quiet method is part of the meaning as he turns his camera on disregarded lives and moments so that realized in art they may then be recognized in reality. —GILLIAN PARKER

AN UNMARRIED WOMAN

Director: Paul Mazursky. Script: Mazursky. Photography: Arthur Ornitz. Music: Bill Conti. Twentieth Century-Fox.

Paul Mazursky's *An Unmarried Woman* wants to capitalize on feminism, but it is more a cartoon about the condition of life among the Manhattan chic. This is the genre Mazursky has made his own: the romantic cartoon that keeps up with "life-style" trends. He did have two affectionate films in *Harry and Tonto* and *Next Stop, Greenwich Village*, but more often his forte is lyrically to appreciate the resilience of cool and stylish heroes lurching *toward* happy endings and *back from* any sharp break with the conventions of their beloved terrain. Too often we get something of a mélange of *New Yorker* stories and *New Yorker* ads. In and out of this celebration Mazursky trails a superficial parody of the scene's marginal oddities, in the manner of one of those *New Yorker* cartoons consigned to the back pages during a slow week.

The plot of *An Unmarried Woman* has the familiarity of a string of clichés. Stockbroker husband (Michael Murphy) reveals he has been having an affair with a younger woman, and leaves charming, witty, pretty wife Erica (Jill Clayburgh), secretary at an art gallery, and daughter Patty (Lisa

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others' expectations, and the values of the outside world, than the truth: she followed the rules of the game, which she now understands.

She sits knitting, staring into space. When the film began she was a child, and now she looks almost like an old woman, brooding on the abuse of her life. Then she turns and regards the audience with a chilling look of knowledge and anger.

Both in *The Lacemaker* and in his earlier film *The Invitation*, Goretta stands at a critical distance from current assumptions, turning away to discover in the restraint and integrity of his common-place characters signs of a saving remnant. Their attempts to create small areas of order and to maintain lives with some degree of dignity are at odds with a much stronger culture of indifference and contempt. In both films his positive characters and their values are unfashionable according to most standards: a timid clerk, one of many in a modern steel-and-concrete office, brings out on his desk during the lunch-hour an old book on naturalism, and pores over its prints of plants with delight; an elderly unmarried typist on a rare day out raises her arms in sudden pleasure in the sunlight; a grocer's assistant, Beatrice's mother, pours extra thick cream in her daughter's coffee as a small attempt at comfort; Beatrice, among endless rows of identical graves in a war cemetery, quietly places a sea-shell she had been saving on one of the unknown headstones, a gesture of recognition and affinity.

The films recognize both the heroism of such gestures and lives, and the overwhelming odds against them. One scene, in *The Invitation*, might be a metaphor for Goretta's vision. The middle-aged clerk and amateur naturalist enjoys his flowers in the evening, examining them through a magnifying lens with quiet care; but when the camera pulls back we see from the wider perspective that his house and garden are surrounded at a close distance by intercrossing freeways where the traffic roars, and by serried blocks of concrete apartments. There is something at once movingly heroic and absurd about the man, blithely ignoring the forces that deny him value. In *The Lacemaker* the rows of uniform blocks are graves in the war cemetery, with only Beatrice's sea-shell to counter their endless anonymity.

No one notices Beatrice's action in the graveyard, except the audience; and since it is left unemphasized, we too could pass it by. Goretta's direction is unobtrusive and demanding. Where more conventional films tend to manipulate the audience by sensationalism, or by triggering automatic reactions to fixed codes, and where more experimental films launch rhetorical assaults on the viewer to change his mind, here the viewer's independent moral judgment is called for—if he is to follow the meaning of the film he has to notice small things. Time for this is allowed by the relatively slow pacing, which in itself contains a criticism of the opposing norms of violent speed and stimulation. Conscious of the way the conventions of art interpenetrate with reality. Goretta's quiet method is part of the meaning as he turns his camera on disregarded lives and moments so that realized in art they may then be recognized in reality. —GILLIAN PARKER

AN UNMARRIED WOMAN

Director: Paul Mazursky. Script: Mazursky. Photography: Arthur Ornitz. Music: Bill Conti. Twentieth Century-Fox.

Paul Mazursky's *An Unmarried Woman* wants to capitalize on feminism, but it is more a cartoon about the condition of life among the Manhattan chic. This is the genre Mazursky has made his own: the romantic cartoon that keeps up with "life-style" trends. He did have two affectionate films in *Harry and Tonto* and *Next Stop, Greenwich Village*, but more often his forte is lyrically to appreciate the resilience of cool and stylish heroes lurching *toward* happy endings and *back from* any sharp break with the conventions of their beloved terrain. Too often we get something of a mélange of *New Yorker* stories and *New Yorker* ads. In and out of this celebration Mazursky trails a superficial parody of the scene's marginal oddities, in the manner of one of those *New Yorker* cartoons consigned to the back pages during a slow week.

The plot of *An Unmarried Woman* has the familiarity of a string of clichés. Stockbroker husband (Michael Murphy) reveals he has been having an affair with a younger woman, and leaves charming, witty, pretty wife Erica (Jill Clayburgh), secretary at an art gallery, and daughter Patty (Lisa

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Lucas); Erica is furious; Patty feels bereft; Erica gets depressed; Erica fights off predatory men; Erica gets support from a group of woman friends; with help from a female therapist, Erica learns to become unmarried; seven weeks after husband has left, therapist urges Erica to get involved with men; after a one-night stand with one artist, Erica meets Mr. Right ("Saul Kaplan," played by Alan Bates) and falls in love with him; Mr. Right is sexy, honest, ingratiating, friendly to Patty, desirable to Erica's friends, and, not last, a devoted and commercially successful artist; Mr. Right has trouble respecting Erica's hard-won freedom. Fade out on Erica fighting for privileges in her new relationship. This prepackaged plot matches Mazursky's tight directorial style; everything moves along briskly; no one is going to be granted too much freedom, too many mistakes; no scene is going to last long enough to let a mask stay down. In the life-style cartoon, the greatest audience attraction is, precisely, that slickness we call style: the ability to crack jokes at the expense of deviants while catering to the audience's dominant mythology, and all this in living color.

Feminism is the subject matter the film exploits. This is Mazursky's doing; plainly it is not because of Jill Clayburgh's incapacities. Her Erica gives signs of deep feelings as well as quick wit; for the first two-thirds of the film, she carries its energy and intelligence as well as its story. She is the forebearing but smart wife, and then the lyric princess who dances out *Swan Lake* in her high, glassed-in apartment in the Upper East Side; she is the convincingly enraged wife who, when her husband says he's leaving, tells him off sharply, staggers away and throws up. She looks *enraged;* her feelings seem convincingly deep and earned. When she fends off her doctor and the proverbially lecherous friend-of-a-friend, she is magnificently tough; and she is just as convincingly tender in scenes with her daughter and her therapist. There are dimensions in her face; she is allowed to step outside the cartoon for whole scenes.

But Erica's decisive, autonomous presence as the center of the film shrivels as soon as she meets Mr. Right. From the moment Saul Kaplan steps into the film, showing how his paintings should be hung in the gallery where Erica works, he takes over. This is not simply because of Alan Bates's acting force; directorial choice is at work. In that scene, Erica stands off to one side, one of the admirers, marginal: a sign of the marginality that will now become her fate. We're asked to believe that she's happy to move aside. Saul sweeps her off her feet—literally, at one point—and she revels in the pleasure of having regained status as a sexual object. Saul looks more and more right by chic, sexist standards: his paintings are modish, his feelings are abundant, he comes on direct, and he proves, as he stands up to Erica's former lover at a loft party, that his passion is knightly. And the Erica who had been keenly keeping her distance from predators vanishes from the film. What signs we have had of her critical intelligence are terminated; her emotions become one-dimensional. She is once more in thrall: no longer to the hypocrite stockbroker husband, but now, in the umpteen-thousandth rendition of the romantic bourgeois myth, to The-Artist-as-Romantic-Hero. The same woman who forced a vulgar, assaulting date out of a cab now fails to notice that Saul Kaplan condescends to her, chiding her as "willful" when she wonders whether she is any more to him than a sex object.

In fact, despite her brief excursion on her own, what has not changed in Erica—what Mazursky has not permitted to change—is her sense of herself as a sex object, as a woman who can be happy only when she is submitting to a man. Indeed, apart from men she fails to become much of a character. She mentions that she attended Vassar once, but we don't find out what she learned there. When one of her woman friends, newly single, plays out radical chic by bemoaning the fact that there are no great causes nowadays—"Vietnam, the Black Panthers"—Erica cracks, "Too bad we don't have another war," or words to that effect, but her irony is purely negative: we learn nothing about her political ideas. Most egregiously, although Erica is presented as a woman of normal emotions, she never grieves the loss of a 16-year marriage. But to have shown her on her own and grieving would have been to respect her experience as a woman; and this is precisely what Mazursky does not do. Instead, he makes sure she gets hitched up fast. He never lets her become much more than a sex object for either lovers *or audience.* Even when she is in her rage-at-men phase,

he has her dancing around in panties and sighing to her therapist about how she hasn't been laid in seven weeks. (The therapist presumably has never heard of masturbation as an alternative to being a sex object for men.) But by tracing Erica's return to men to the therapist's bizarre advice, Mazursky draws attention away from the fact that it is *he* who is shipping her back into sexual subjugation. Within five filmic minutes, Erica has gone to bed with Saul and fallen in love with him; he's sexist enough to think nothing of starting to undress her on the street, an act Mazursky endorses as charming. When Erica wavers in committing herself to Saul utterly, one of her woman friends advises her to follow him to his Vermont studio, and none of these friends advises the contrary. The feminist point of view drops out of the film just when it would have some bite.

Mazursky contrives to make Erica's new subjugation convincing by tendering her—and us—Saul as the glamorous artist. She is easily bamboozled by his glow, just as several reviewers (in *The New Yorker* and *Ms.*, among others) have been. The myth of the artist-lover-hero is what lends Erica's choice the appearance of emotional sense. Though she refers vaguely to a desire to teach, Erica within the film's span remains the gallery secretary, drawn to art for a reason she is not empowered to articulate. At one point, she raves about someone, "He's an artist!"—as if that high station justified everything. At another point, she dotes as Saul pours his jars of bright color onto his canvas; she is dazzled by this cartoon evocation of the freedom and audacity now associated with abstract expressionism. Mazursky wants us to be dazzled as well; through Saul Kaplan Mazursky is flattering his own claims on the territory of art. When Erica tries to convince Saul to come back from Vermont for some weekends in the city, he is offended, and protests: "If I stop painting for a few days, I may stop painting forever." This is supposed to settle the matter. Mazursky offers no critical angle on the artist-genius's glamor.

Indeed, Kaplan shines in the most favorable light possible. Conveniently, he is British; his origin explains not only some of his charm, but the fact that his children are not in evidence to test his uncomplicated image. Instead, we are given

AN UNMARRIED WOMAN

Kaplan as the pure artist-lover—and a rich and successful one, he reminds Erica. At the very end, to mock her residual wish for independence, he leaves her with one of his big gaudy paintings in the street, without means of transporting it to her apartment. She wafts through Manhattan hanging on to the canvas as it sways and swings her around like a sail. Mazursky leaves her in the street, obscurely triumphant: but this is because *we* in the audience know that Kaplan is a hot-shot artist, and so the gift he has given her is *valuable.* The episode is treated comically; the important thing for Mazursky is that Kaplan remain endearing. Erica's independence by this time is a formality; it is as if her desire for independence has shed the character who originated it, and persists only as a pale ghost.

By contrast with the delectable Kaplan, the only other character who acts forcefully on Erica is the therapist Tanya (Penelope Russianoff). Her therapy is shallow and incompetent. She serves as a mouthpiece for trendy seventies egotism, making the astounding proclamation that it's always wrong to feel guilty. She counsels Erica to accept some depression; but, instead of helping her to grieve, as the loss of her marriage deserves, she sends her out to find men—within seven weeks. This therapist who is presumably devoted to helping Erica gain her independence infantilizes her by speaking to her in the first person plural. If Erica is an object of male lust (her lovers keep telling her her husband was crazy to leave her for *another* sex object), Tanya is a butt of ridicule only. As a Mazursky woman, she is certainly no serious counterbalance to Saul's suaveness. For wisdom and savvy, Erica is left choiceless.

When we consider the film without its often

funny buffoon cameos, we are left with a smooth, seamless world, a world as sure of itself as Mazursky's camera, which always know where to point, what to show, and what to leave out. In this film of surfaces, the surfaces amount to the core. With all its rich color and gorgeous finish, the New York City of *An Unmarried Woman* is above all a romantic look at selected Manhattan *ambiences:* the Upper East Side, land of chic restaurants, white sofas, and jogs along the East River, and SoHo, land of the avant-garde artist as successful entrepreneur. Where Woody Allen mocks some of this same scene's pretensions in *Annie Hall,* Mazursky only certifies it as desirable. In Mazursky's urban pastoral, this is a world at home with itself. At the beginning, the husband reads a horror story from *The Times* about kids assaulting a teacher, but that is elsewhere, invisible: "The Bronx." "Oh." The only visible sign that the world that awaits Erica is less than fully wonderful is the dogshit her husband jogs into at the very beginning of the film; but it only goes to show what a klutz he is.

Mazursky cannot be faulted for drawing on trends, on some by now hackneyed themes of feminism: anger at men, a women's group (though distinctly not a consciousness-raising group), a few assertive statements. All films, after all, exploit material drawn from someone else's experience, and American experience now partakes of many trends that beg for both romance and parody. What is wrong with *An Unmarried Woman* is that it draws these tidbits into the orbit of the most conventional masculine fantasy, and plays upon the whole gaudy aura to build a big box office. If Mazursky had been willing to let Erica suffer and learn, he might have made a film which respected his heroine. As it is, the film disappoints and annoys just to the degree that, in some of its moments, it promises to burst through the bounds of the cartoon. Patty the daughter has some good lines, a fine presence, and an interesting tough-tender relation to her mother; but she is kept out of the most charged scenes. Erica intimates intelligence, but forgets her feelings on cue. Saul Kaplan is the emblem of Mazursky's failure of nerve; he comes along to ensure that nothing untoward will develop from these uppity women, nothing that a few wry jokes can't keep in the package.

—TODD GITLIN and CAROL S. WOLMAN

PRINT GENERATION

A film by J. J. Murphy. This film and 5 other Murphy works are distributed by Canyon Cinema and Film-Makers' Coop; 3 more are available from the Museum of Modern Art.

For seven years J. J. Murphy has been crafting interesting film experiences, using an unusual creative method which combines careful decision-making and the chance operations of film materials and processes. For almost every film Murphy carefully chooses to concentrate on specific subject matter and, at the same time, decides in advance upon a formal strategy for recording or processing this subject matter which will admit of developments that cannot be totally foreseen. Having determined the temporal and spatial coordinates of this formal situation, he shoots the film and then presents the completed footage to the viewer, as fully as possible without altering whatever developments have occurred.

In Murphy's early films the formal strategies are relatively simple, though in every instance, the results are impressive. *Highway Landscape* (1971–72) is a 6½-minute single-shot record of events on an Iowa highway, photographed by a stationary camera which peers across the roadway at ground level. The energy of the vehicles which hurtle past the camera and the perceptual interactions between our sight (we are limited to the single rigidly-framed image) and hearing (the sound track enlarges our awareness of sound far beyond the visual frame) create a powerful and engaging image of the American highway. *Ice* (1972) is more overtly reflexive than *Highway Landscape.* A stationary camera looks continuously into a block of ice on the far side of which a projector projects a second film. The result is a crystalline environment of flashing light and subtle colors. For *In Progress* (co-made with Ed Small, 1971–72) a rural landscape was photographed in brief glimpses—usually less than five seconds long—over a period of

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several months. The resulting footage, which was not "cleaned up" in any way for the finished film, includes both the fascinating changes which occur continuously in the outer world and the many kinds of reflexive imagery created by the film grain, by reflections on the lens, and by other aspects of the equipment and materials. *Sky Blue Water Light Sign* (1972) demonstrates the ability of the film medium to transform a relatively common event in a startling way. By photographing a revolving Hamms Beer sign in such a way as to eliminate surrounding objects, Murphy creates considerable tension in viewers, who tend to be puzzled and greatly amused by the mysterious landscape they see before them.

By 1973 the success of his early experiments had led Murphy to attempt a film of much larger scope and much greater complexity. The result was *Print Generation*, one of the major films of the seventies and, possibly, the most accessible of all longer "structural" works. To an unusual extent, *Print Generation* invites active participation. At the beginning one sees only a series of shimmering reddish dots, in configurations which change every second. Viewers who know nothing about the film before seeing it often become involved when they begin to realize that actually they are seeing a limited number of images which are being repeated over and over in increasingly identifiable forms. Some viewers can be heard counting aloud, trying to determine the exact number of shots. The next step is to try and identify the images that are forming. Most viewers I have spoken with have suggested that before they could definitely identify the imagery, they guessed that Murphy had photographed complicated scenes or dramatic vistas. Often the guesses are so involved that final recognition of the images—one-second shots of children, rural scenes, small-town store windows, etc.—comes as a shock. No sooner do the images appear in their completed form, than they begin to disintegrate, and viewers find themselves trying to recall what the images were. This new activity is made particularly difficult because some of the completed images are recognizable for only one or two generations (for only one or two seconds, in other words), and others are difficult to completely understand.* Not long after the disintegration process has begun, viewers have nearly as difficult a time trying to recall the images as they had trying to guess them in the first place: often, the most convincing guesses made during the early part of the film come back to mind. By the conclusion of *Print Generation* we are almost back where we began.

While *Print Generation* is enjoyable and suggestive even if one is not aware of how it was made, the more one knows about the process Murphy set in motion in order to develop his imagery, the more interesting the film becomes. Most viewers are able to guess that the images were produced by some sort of filmic printing process. Murphy's use of technical terms for the title of the film and for its subdivisions ("A-wind" and "B-wind") however, makes clear that more detailed information is necessary. Specifically, *Print Generation* is the result of Murphy's exploration of contact printing, a method of generating a print through direct contact, by laying print stock along an original. Having made a one-minute film of sixty one-second personal images, Murphy had a lab make a print of this film, then a print of the print, then a print of the print of the print, and so forth. Since each generation of printing subtracted from

*For example, what is the imagery in shots 2 and 23 (the first shot is a tree-covered Vermont mountainside, the last is a long shot of some boys at the end of a dock); is there a lizard or a praying mantis on the path in shot 11; are there birds in the bushes in shot 54; what exactly is the nature of the shot where Murphy photographs his reflection in a window; what is the woman sitting cross-legged in shot 17 doing with her hands? The ambiguity of these and other shots tends to create a desire for multiple viewings of the film, a desire which is never quite satiated.

◀ PRINT GENERATION

the photographic quality of the original images, it was inevitable that if he printed prints of prints long enough, the images would entirely disappear. He had the lab make prints until he had fifty generations, which he then proceeded to arrange. Since each successive generation of contact printing produces a mirror image of the original it is made from, an adjustment was necessary. Murphy divided the generations into A-wind (the twenty-five generations of one configuration) and B-wind (the twenty-five generations of the opposite configuration) and arranged them so that in 16mm prints the imagery is in the same configuration throughout. We first see "A-wind," starting with the imagery in its most disintegrated state and moving progressively up through the generations until it has completely evolved. After several credits, "B-wind" moves progressively back toward the imagery in its most disintegrated state.*

Once Murphy's use of the contact printing process is understood, one can see that the specifics of the imagery were not predictable, except in the most general sense. As a result, the various developments that occur during our journey "up" and "down" through the emulsion and the complexity of the rhythms created by the continually changing appearance of the sixty images offer new territory for both the viewer's and the film-maker's exploration. Even a general review of some of the more obvious developments gives an idea of the extent of this territory. At the beginning of the film we see groups of dull reddish dots on a dark background; as we move up through the layers of the emulsion, the red becomes more vivid and is highlighted by dots of white. Before long, more and more dots are forming, and some of these begin to form lines. After a few more generations, the white dots begin to disappear and areas of red are forming. When the white dots are nearly gone, we are seeing a variety of areas of different hues of pink and red. Then blue dots, smaller than the original white and red dots become visible, and the reddish areas begin to develop into white areas with a touch of red here and there. The blue dots multiply, then grow slowly green; the white areas grow whiter; greys and browns grow visible; and vinally we see the "finished" imagery. During the second half of the film the process is approximately reversed. The rhythms which develop during the various print generations are multileveled. Most obvious are the consistent one-second measure created by the changing of the shots and the cyclic repetition of each image every minute. At times our perception of even these basic patterns varies with our mental state, so much so that we wonder if the length of shots has been altered. Other kinds of rhythm are created by the constantly changing patterns of still and shimmering dots, by the continual alteration in the concentration and distribution of the various dots within the frame, and by the movement of the people and objects in the image and the wavering of the hand-held camera. Once one begins to identify the images, rhythm is sometimes carried from one shot through others: the toddling of the little boy in shot 45, for example, is echoed in shot 47. Generally speaking, several of these patterns of rhythm are evident at any given point in the film, though the details of their interrelationships are continually shifting.

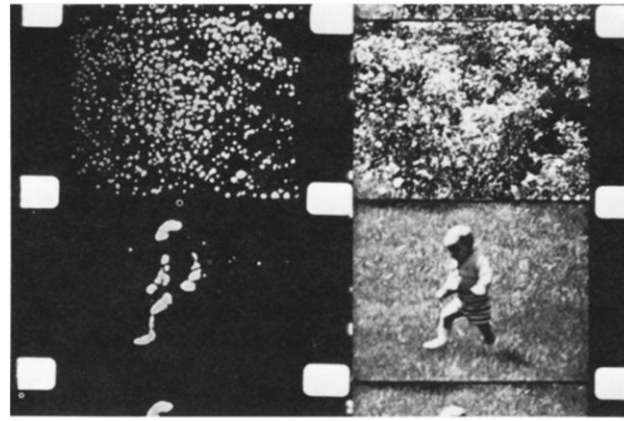
The experiences the finished film creates for viewers and the imagery produced by the print generation process are extremely suggestive in a metaphoric sense. Since Murphy did not know in any detail how the imagery produced by generating the fifty prints would look, he cannot be thought of as consciously creating metaphors. Nevertheless, the interaction of Murphy's original

*For his sound track Murphy conducted a similar experiment. He tape-recorded one minute of ocean sounds, then he recorded the recording, recorded the recording of that recording, and so forth, until the sounds had disintegrated to noise. For the finished film he arranged for the sound to move in a direction conceptually opposite to the visuals; that is, at the beginning we hear the waves clearly, then less and less clearly until we reach a point of maximum distortion half way through the film; then we move back toward less distortion until the end. At first the ocean waves are clearly identifiable, but as the tape generations pass, the sound track comes to sound more like thunder and rain than like waves. Around a third of the way to the credits a multilayered mechanical hum has become apparent; it is punctuated by the disintegrated sounds of the crashing waves, which now sound like drum rolls. By two-thirds of the way through, the sound has grown quite ominous, something like World War II bombers. By the end of A-wind the basic hum has come to completely dominate the sound track. The second half of the film reverses the process.

preparations and the complex mechanisms of film fortuitously resulted in metaphoric possibilities which the subsequent choice of the A-wind, B-wind order reconfirmed.* These spontaneously generated metaphoric dimensions are as interesting to consider as the carefully constructed patterns of imagery in more fully controlled films. In fact, since they develop naturally out of the film process, the metaphoric implications of *Print Generation* can be thought of as revealing and suggestive indices to fundamental elements of reality.

One area of potential metaphor in *Print Generation* involves the process of anticipation-experience-memory many viewers go through during the film. This process can be thought of as a metaphor for a common experience of the passing of time: we often undergo a psychological build-up to moments we expect will be especially exciting, only to find that the exciting moments themselves disappear much more quickly than we have expected, leaving us with memories limited not only by time, but by our inability to fully comprehend what we've been through. These experiences can remind us that everything is constantly in a state of change, that even life's best experiences are so evanescent that they tend to be gone before we can fully grasp them. Of course, Murphy must have had this theme in mind to some extent in his original decision to use personal images only one second long and in his determination to explore successive generations of contact printing.

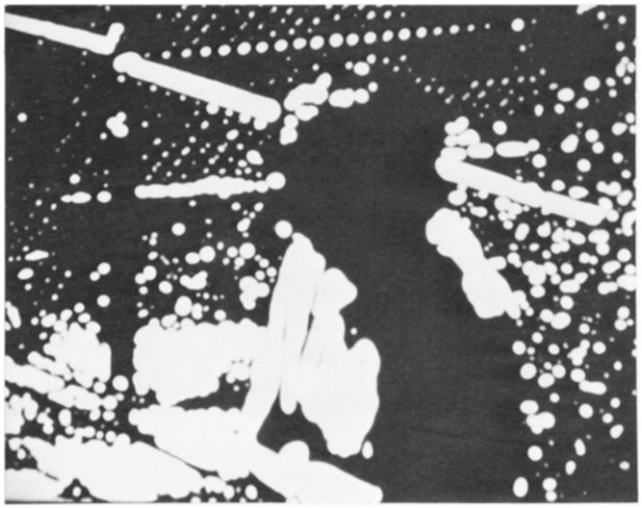
A second general metaphoric dimension *Print Generation* makes available extends these implications. The viewer needs little imagination to relate the tiny dots one sees near the beginning of the film to atoms or molecules or to stars flickering in a night sky. As the film progresses, and the dots begin to develop into lines, we may see crystals or tiny organisms, or we may be reminded of the formation of constellations or nebulae, depending upon whether we emphasize the microscopic or the telescopic implications of the imagery. As the outlines grow increasingly complete and more clearly identifiable, some look like human skeletons, others like buildings under construction. Overall, the slow development of the imagery in *Print Generation* tends to suggest the evolution of the earth, of living organisms, and of human existence as we know it. Since the second half of the film involves movement in the opposite direction, the coming and going of the imagery can be understood as part of those microscopic and macroscopic changes which are endlessly altering the universe.



Left two shots: early-generation images; right two shots: corresponding later-generation images derived from the same shots.

In 1977 Murphy finished *Movie Stills*, a second impressive long work, which is reminiscent of *Print Generation* in several ways. *Movie Stills* presents a series of sixteen single-shot, black and white still images, each of which seems to go through the process of photographic development as we watch. The curiosity aroused by the gradual, suspenseful evolution of the imagery is similar to the effect of the slow formation of the images in *Print Generation*; and the subtle, complex effects of the swirling grain in *Movie Stills* remind one of the colors and rhythms of the opening sections of the earlier film. Further, as is true in *Print Generation*, the processes Murphy set in motion to make

*During public appearances with his films Murphy has indicated that his imagery could be arranged in a variety of ways. The B-wind, as edited, could come before the A-wind, causing the film to move from fully generated imagery to maximum degeneration back to the original one-minute film. A double projection could be arranged so that on one side one would see A-wind, then B-wind and on the other side B-wind, then A-wind. That he continues to be fascinated with such options reflects the primacy of Murphy's concern with the physical fact of the imagery which the print generation process created; his continued distribution of the film in the A-wind, B-wind arrangement, however, suggests a willingness to accept the metaphoric implications of this particular organization.



PRINT GENERATION

Movie Stills fortuitously result in potential metaphoric implications. The fact that the continually developing imagery generally moves beyond the point of maximum clarity and lightness to a darker, more shadowy form, for example, tends to reconfirm *Print Generation*'s theme of constant flux, of birth and decay.*

All of Murphy's best work—and *Print Generation* most effectively—offers a challenge to the pervasive notion that important films can only be created by film-makers who exert complete control over every aspect of the film-making process so that each second of a finished film will be informed by their previously determined visions. True, Murphy's decisions to record and work with certain types of subject matter in specific formal ways are reflective of a specific, definable outlook. Because of the nature of Murphy's formal choices and their unpredictable results, however, his outlook is only one aspect of his finished films, which again and again provide both viewer and filmmaker with experiences different from and more interesting than either might have predicted.

—SCOTT MACDONALD

*Unlike *Print Generation*, *Movie Stills* develops a skeletal narrative involving two men and a woman, the general direction of which grows clear at the same time that the continual development of the individual images keeps specifics consistently ambiguous. The finished film forces viewers to reconsider a number of their habitual assumptions. By combining still photographs which "move" and motion pictures which remain "still," Murphy causes us to reassess our usual distinctions between types of photography. By creating imagery which simultaneously goes through almost infinite formal changes and which apparently records complex, ambiguous interactions between people, Murphy produces a film which is both formal and narrative. Finally, to the extent that *Movie Stills is* narrative, it confronts our usual distinctions between fiction and nonfiction: we never know to what degree our impression of a particular person or event results from an accurate reproduction of the original moment, from accidents which occurred during the processing of the images, or from vagaries of our personal ways of interpreting facial expressions and body language.

Controversy & Correspondence

CREATIVE REMEMBERING (AND OTHER PERILS OF FILM STUDY)

I went to see *The Wild Child* with someone who paid intimate and careful attention to the film; who understood it as completely, as personally, and as intellectually (if one can make the distinction between "personal" and "intellectual" response without killing the mind) as anyone could; and who was yet convinced, not twenty minutes after we left the theater, that the film had been in color. It was how she saw it, what she *had seen.* Without getting into a Gestaltist argument here, or even appealing to Metz's useful notion of the "imaginary signifier," I should like to take

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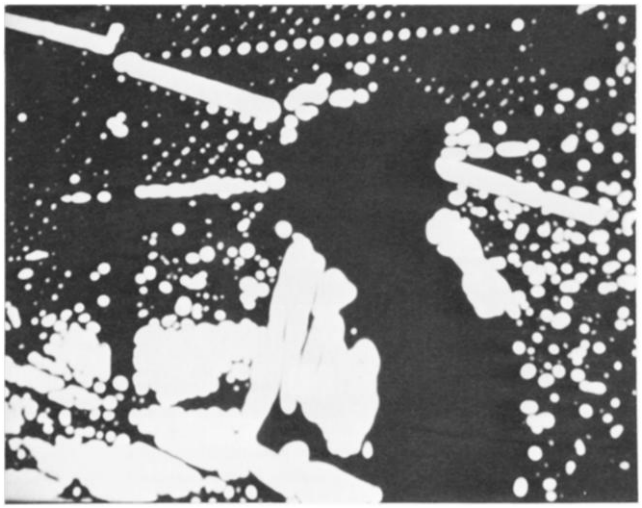

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up some of the difficulties inherent in writing accurately about a medium that invites an amalgam of subjective and objective response, yet whose texts are often not available for consultation—cannot simply be pulled off the bookshelf—when the moment to write about them is at hand. I should like to offer—from my own experience as a teacher, author, and audience of film criticism—a couple of useful ways of avoiding errors of description.

Last month a student asked me whether I had written anything about film or was just "in the error business." It was at that point I realized just how much class time I had been spending in having my students cross out dates and other "hard" information in the texts we were using, and how much they had accordingly come to distrust the books as tools. In fact there is no shortage of good books on film, nor of carefully researched articles. Even reading a good book, however, one is liable to find *some* errors, and in several of the widely circulated textbooks one finds little else. These range from errors in dating and attribution to inaccurate descriptions of what happens in a given film. On page 202 of Sadoul's *Dictionary of Film Makers* (ed. Peter Morris), for instance, Porter's *Life of an American Fireman* is dated 1902 in column A and 1903 in column B—as it is 1902 in Rhode's *History of the Cinema* and 1903 in Mast's *Short History of the Movies* (and in the Museum of Modern Art's film catalogue). Even such a careful, committed study as Rudi Blesh's *Keaton* contains, on p. 230, a wonderfully written but simply wrong description of the climax of *Our Hospitality* (compare Robinson's *Keaton*, p. 88). On the other hand, Robinson's *Keaton* (p. 96) says that *Sherlock Junior* opens with a close-up of Buster, who is revealed two shots later to be sitting near a pile of trash in an auditorium; actually, an auditorium shot occurs before the close-up. So, nobody's perfect, and I don't want to get pedantic here, but I do want to stress that many people depend on these books for descriptions of films they have not been able to see, and have a right to expect accuracy.

Take p. 135 of Roud's *Godard* (second edition), which I happened to be using a few days after I had been asked whether I was in the error business and which is, on the whole, a distinguished piece of work. We were showing *Weekend* in class, so it was easy for me to pick out, from this single page, four simple errors of description: the couple does not drive a Dauphine; the traffic-jam track lasts eight minutes, not "a full ten"; the "milkmaid" is Emily Brontë; the rabbit has already been skinned before the mother is killed (and that skinning is never shown). Now it may not be a grave matter that Roud needs a new watch or mistakes the brand of car, but he uses his description of the way the couple's killing of the mother is presented "in counterpoint to shots of a rabbit being skinned" to make a serious point about the stripping away of "the veneer of civilization," and there simply is no such sequence in the film, even if Roud is right about the general implications of the murder itself.

The problem Roud's page manifests could be removed through the application of a rigorous system of notation (more on that later). There are other writers, however, whose work is characterized not by inadvertent carelessness but by real sloppiness—not so much in the matter of description as in that of objective research. I am thinking particularly of two textbooks, Lee Bobker's *Elements of Film* and Gerald Mast's *A Short History of the Movies*, but I don't mean to suggest that Mast's is as poor as Bobker's.

A Short History, when it first came out, struck many of us as a useful expansion of Knight's *The Liveliest Art;* it was, however, marred by a number of errors. When I called this to the attention of the publisher, Bobbs-Merrill solicited corrections from myself and others, and Mast took most of them into account when writing the second edition of his book. This ought to have been a successful instance of the process of informed feedback; the problem is that, even so, the second edition needs to be gone through with a red pencil. *Birth of a Nation*, for instance, is still called "Griffith's longest film" (p. 134), although in both the original release and extant versions *Intolerance* is longer, and Prof. Rath in *The Blue Angel* is still Prof. Unrat (p. 178).

Elements of Film (second edition) raises another order of problem. It sells well, is used widely, and is in most respects mediocre. Is there another way to characterize a "textbook" in which a summary of *Jules and Jim* begins by describing "Jules (Henri Serre), an Austrian, and Jim (Oskar Werner), a Frenchman" (p. 193); in which *M* is "Fritz Lang's

classic 1917 melodrama" (p. 177); in which *The Servant* is an adaptation "of Pinter's short play *The Servant*" (p. 177) and the victims in *Potemkin* run *up* the Odessa Steps (p. 113)? I spent about a week drawing up a list of errors and quarrels, sent it to the publisher, and received in response a lengthy tape in which Bobker argued that most of the things I had questioned were matters of opinion. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich has still not indicated whether they intend to insert an errata sheet, commission a third edition, or continue to market the text as is; they did, however, let me know that *none* of the book's users had ever complained about its accuracy. What *that* argues is that many of the people who teach film are either incompetent or lazy. It seems extremely unlikely that a national sample of English teachers would assign and endorse a textbook in the history of the novel whose discussion of *Tom Jones* began, for instance, by dating it 1680 and then went on to confuse the names of the major characters.

The best general film text on the market, James Monaco's lucid and rigourous *How to Read a Film* (Oxford), contains the sort of errors that could be corrected between printings: Max Steiner is called Fritz (p. 183), *To Have and Have Not* is dated 1946 (p. 244), *Last Year at Marienbad* shows up in an otherwise excellent chronology as Resnais's big 1959 film (p. 475), etc. But Monaco is a responsible scholar as well as a careful writer, and one can assume that he and Oxford will either circulate an errata sheet or modify the text before the time for a second edition rolls around.

The problem, in its simplest terms, is twofold: some people make avoidable mistakes (with the best intentions, no doubt), and others—from publishers to readers—not only fail to correct these mistakes but actually endorse them. I don't intend to multiply examples, but it seems useful to indicate that serious questions of interpretation and analysis hinge on the issue of accuracy, and that all this can matter to the professional scholar as much as to the beginning student. In the class after *Weekend* we showed *2 or 3 Things I Know About Her;* I wanted the students to have the text of the metaphysical coffee-cup sequence, so they wouldn't have to spend all their time reading the subtitles, and turned to the screenplay. On page 138 of *Godard: Three Films* I found the kind of minor error that can really mislead: "150 frames" reads "150 pages":

> That was how Juliette, at 3:37 p.m., came to be looking at the turning pages of an object which, in journalistic jargon, is known as "magazine." [Cut] And that was how, about one hundred and fifty pages further on, another young woman, like her in every way, a kindred spirit, a sister, was also gazing at the same object.

The point is not that the pages shown in the second shot occur 150 pages later in the magazine (they don't), but that the film announces the distance along its own length between the start of the first shot and the start of the second. To bury the reference to Baudelaire's "mon semblable, mon frère"—well, I can bring that out in class; but how many people will trust their own memory of "150 frames" when consulting an "official" screenplay, and go on to explore one of Godard's most elegant and accessible reflexive gestures?

At present, then, one cannot automatically trust what one reads in a screenplay, a history, an in-depth study, or even a film encyclopedia. This situation could be ameliorated if writers made a point of re-screening every film they've written about, before their work goes to press, and if readers gave publishers more consistent and rigorous feedback. As it is, there are few film libraries —complete with Steenbeck—to which the scholar can have adequate, regular access. Film scholarship is where it is because one cannot have every film that matters in easy reach, tends to trust his or her memory (especially of a film that has had a strong impact, that matters enough that one wants to write about it), and may in a pinch check "the facts" in a screenplay or study whose author was in this same position. Memory, however, is often creative. What one remembers is what one has seen, felt, thought—not necessarily what was there to be seen; one remembers experience, which is an amalgam. The basic texts in film study are the films;* one needs a way to write them down

*As Raymond Bellour has demonstrated in "The Unattainable Text" (*Screen*, XVI, 3, pp. 19-27), "the word text as applied to film is metaphorical" because a film text cannot be quoted. When we have solved all the problems of access to films, of methods of notation, etc., we will still need to keep up some process of translation between the record of the text and the text itself ("the locus of an unbounded openness"—Bellour, p. 20).

for reference, and must further be willing to see them again, no matter how brilliantly one may have written about them. What follows, then, is a series of elementary procedures the writer may find helpful. In an ideal future they would all be as obvious as they ought to be now, but evidently aren't.

It is, of course, essential to see a film several times before writing anything serious about it. One needs, on first viewing, to be led through the film without knowing where it's going: to be confused, excited, suspended, moved. But one would not write about *Citizen Kane* ten minutes after first finding out what Rosebud was. There have to be later viewings, in which one can step back from the film and see its structure, and the ways the shots create that structure. All this is easier on an editing table—or, in the foreseeable future, with videodisc—but if you *have* to do your work in a movie theater, one of the most effective checks on memory is to tape the sound track on a cassette recorder. (This is probably illegal, so destroy the tape when you're done with it.) If the screenplay is available, it's important to run through it while playing back the tape, making whatever changes are indicated. To the greatest extent possible, try to turn the printed screenplay (usually pre-production) into a cutting continuity (post-production). It's also possible to make another tape while watching the film again, muttering "cut," "slow dolly-in," etc. (to augment the sound track, which should still be clear in the background) or your running insights as you watch the film.

These tapes, however useful, should be supplemented by a written continuity of the visuals. If you can't write by screenlight, you might want to devise a clip-board with a battery-operated light box, or else use a ball-point pen with a built-in flashlight. Keep a running record of the film, sequence by sequence. The second time, try to work in dialogue and commentary. A private, technical shorthand is useful here (T for track shot, or whatever).

Finally, check out your perception of what happened in the film with someone who's seen it recently. At this point you're ready to go home and write it up—to explore every connection, every opening, while remaining in touch with the text. This is also the best time to read other critics on the subject—and to write to their publishers; this kind of grass-roots activity, this checking-out by people who have seen the films recently, can help make the books that *are* available more useful. When your piece is finished, see the film again, to make sure you haven't introduced any errors while following your train of thought. After that, if you still think *The Wild Child*'s in color—or ought to have been—you can talk about your experience of having seen it that way, without making your reader wonder why the local theater is showing a black-and-white print. A publisher will market what sells; it is up to us to make sure that what goes into those books is true.

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DEFENDING EUROPEAN INDEPENDENTS

William Moritz's review of Malcolm LeGrice's *Abstract Film and Beyond* (*FQ*, Spring 1978) is full of sensible criticisms, but it is also a good example of scholarly overkill. True, LeGrice's definitions and arguments are far too limiting; he overlooks many fine film-makers and types of film-making; and he is too harsh in his criticisms of several film-makers. Moritz is also correct that we are more in need of good analyses of specific film-makers than of premature attempts to write independent film history. But Moritz's strong attack on LeGrice doesn't negate the fundamental motivation of LeGrice's book, the fact that for far too long American critics have seemed quite content to completely ignore European independent film. We need good scholarly treatments of worthy independents—Moritz's monograph on Oskar Fischinger can stand as a model—but we also need articles and books which can help us to grow more fully aware of what films have been made, and LeGrice's book is very valuable in this regard. I, for one, am very grateful to LeGrice for making me aware of some of the film-making achievements of Bruno Carra, Arnaldo Ginna, Hy Hirsh, Kurt Kren, Peter Weibel, Valie Export, Ernst Schmidt, Jr., Birgit and Wilhelm Hein, Werner Nekes, Lutz Mommartz, William Raban, Mike Dunford, Mike Leggett, David Dye, Annabel Nicholson, and the other European film-makers he discusses. Whatever the weaknesses of LeGrice's critical positions, his willingness to bring so many film-makers to our attention makes *Abstract Film and Beyond* well worth reading.

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